

**THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR
IN THE NOVELS OF CLAUDE SIMON AND JUAN MARSÉ**

SARAH WYKES

**QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



This thesis consists of a close reading of the representation of the Spanish Civil War in selected novels of Juan Marsé (1933-) and Claude Simon (1913-). It explores how this representation, ultimately, reveals the traces of their different intellectual contexts.

The initial comparison questions whether Marsé's representation of the Spanish revolution in Barcelona implies, like Simon's account, a negative representation of the concept of political engagement and a similar historical pessimism. It goes on to discuss how this negative view is shaped by the writers' respective historical contexts and aesthetics.

Secondly, since, to varying degrees, the novels studied make the reader critically aware of processes of narrativisation and representation, and of issues of narrative reliability and authority, the thesis explores the extent to which their representations of the Civil War are 'anti-realist'. In order to do so, it initially locates the question of 'realism' or 'anti-realism' in the texts within a wider theoretical framework: that of the critique of realism within poststructuralist French theory after Barthes.

The latter debate over referentiality in literary realism also underpins ongoing critical debates over the status of history as a text. This thesis, thirdly, considers whether both writers' representations of the Civil War and of historical processes suggest a particular attitude towards the writing of history, namely whether and to what extent Simon's and Marsé's representations of the war problematize the relationship between their historical referent – the events of the war and/or its aftermath – and its narration and interpretation. In particular, it asks whether Marsé's texts involve the kind of rejection of progressive historical 'meta-narratives' which is implicit and explicit in Simon's representation of the Civil War, but also whether Simon's texts do, in fact, not simply undermine this model of historical causality but posit an alternative, anti-progressive historical telos.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1-15

Marsé and Simon: Differences and Parallels	1
Narrative Form in the Novels	4
Narrative Form and Historical Representation	6
Realism and Anti-realism: a Critical Framework	6
Barthes: Realism as <i>doxa</i>	9
The Critique of History	14

Chapter One: *Le Palace* 16-72

Introduction	16
Narrative Events	16
Setting	21
Characterisation	24
Narrative Time	29
The Representation of Revolution	34
Literary References	58
The Vision of History	63
History and Fiction	69

Chapter Two: *Si te dicen que caí, Un día volveré, El embrujo de Shanghai* 73-127

Introduction	73
Narrative Events	73
The Treatment of Time	87
The Representation of Barcelona	95
Characterisation	101
The Demythification of the <i>pistolero</i>	104
Representing the Resistance	118

Chapter Three: *Les Géorgiques* 128-205

Introduction	128
<i>Les Géorgiques</i> : Formal Questions	128
The Representation of the Revolution: L.S.M.	133
The Representation of the Revolution: O. and the	139
Rewriting of <i>Homage to Catalonia</i>	
Orwell and the Critique of <i>engagement</i>	150
The Unrepresentability of History	158
Simon's Spain	167
The Other Orwell	170
The Opium of the Intellectuals	183
History with a capital H	191

Chapter Four: <i>Si te dicen que caí, La muchacha de las bragas de oro</i>	206-46
Introduction	206
<i>Si te dicen que caí</i> : a ‘limit text’?	207
Against Literary Theory	215
The Revised Editon of <i>Si te dicen que caí</i>	219
La recuperación de la historia	230
El lotófago	235
Conclusion	248
Appendix	250
Bibliography	253

Introduction

This thesis analyses the representation of the Spanish Civil war in selected novels of Juan Marsé (1933), and Claude Simon (1913-). The main Marsé novels are: *Si te dicen que caí* (1973 & revised edition, 1989), *La muchacha de las bragas de oro* (1978), *Un día volveré* (1982) and *El Embrujo de Shanghai* (1993). The main Simon novels are: *Le Sacre de printemps* (1954), *Le Palace* (1962) and *Les Géorgiques* (1981).¹ In order to contextualize the close reading which forms the bulk of the thesis, this section begins by outlining salient general points of comparison or difference between the two writers. It will then explore briefly the wider theoretical context to the interpretative questions that have structured the close readings.

Marsé and Simon: Differences and Parallels

Apart from their different nationalities, there is an obvious generational gap between the two writers. Born in 1933, Marsé sees his 'época' as being mainly the early postwar period (see Marsé in Samaniego 1990, 379, and Amell 1984, 9). Simon experienced the War as a young man, and his almost obsessive return to the theme of his youthful experiences is recognised by critics (for instance Britton 1993, 3). However, the Civil War is also present thematically in all Marsé's fiction - from his first novel, *Encerrados con un solo juguete* (1960),² even where the allusions are elliptical. Moreover, it is a critical commonplace that without reference to the Civil War it would be impossible to understand the Spanish postwar period, particularly the *años de hambre* – and, equally, fictional representations of it. Indeed, the term 'postwar' is in one sense a misnomer given that the regime's policy after the cessation of hostilities consisted of 'the social and political institutionalization of a vengeful victory [which] really constituted the continuation of war by other means' (Graham & Labanyi 1995, 170).

1. The titles of Marsé's novels are henceforth abbreviated to *Si te dicen*, *La muchacha*, *Un día*, and *El embrujo*. Simon's novels are referred to as *Le Sacre*, *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques* respectively.

2. The Civil War is the implicit cause of the characters' malaise, 'ya que todo lo que en ésta [novela] sucede no es sino un resultado de [la derrota]' (Amell 1984, 40). See also Marsé's comments in Gazarian Gautier 1991, 174 & Devlin 1984, 29.

Si te dicen and *El embrujo* deal with the immediate postwar period yet explicitly link the savage political repression and extreme material deprivation to the War. In *Un día*, the main action is set at the end of the fifties, but still conveys the same pessimistic - or realistic - vision of Franco's Spain (Amell 1984, 24). Finally, in all three novels, but most notably in *Si te dicen*, the Civil War is also referred to explicitly, even if it does not constitute the main time frame of events. Marsé's later novels are more distanced and ironic: *El embrujo* is much lighter in tone than *Un día* while, in turn, *Un día* lacks the anger of *Si te dicen* (Amell 1984, 142).

As regards their critical reception, Simon was for a long time perceived as writing for 'an elite market of intellectually confident readers' (Britton 1993, 7). His work is often associated with the *nouveau roman* movement. The ideas of 'language consciousness' identified with this movement had, relatively speaking, a minor impact in Spain. Indeed, Marsé was taken up as a proponent of 'working class' writing by Seix Barral in the fifties, and, while playing with questions of genre and representation, most of his textual production remains within recognisable generic boundaries. His work is often discussed in terms of 'social realism': Amell describes him as the maximum exponent of the realist tradition within modern Spanish narrative (1984, 8-28; see also Sherzer 1985, 18).

Yet despite the obvious biographical differences, and the different generic labels applied to their writing, there are important parallels between their professed attitudes to theories of textual production. According to Duncan, the early Simon was influenced by Sartre's ideas of literary *engagement*: 'one necessarily incomplete way to understand Simon's early development is to see him as gradually emerging from under Sartre's shadow' (Duncan 1985, 90). Britton also cites Simon's rejection of the Sartrean notion of committed writing, and its equation with Zhdanovist social realism (see Britton 1989, 68). Simon very soon rejected what he saw as a reductive view of literary production and became increasingly concerned with formal experimentation through his involvement with the principal theorist of the *nouveau roman*, Jean Ricardou (Britton 1993, 4-6).³ A simplified notion of Sartrean commitment was also influential among young Spanish writers and critics in the fifties and early sixties in the group surrounding José María Castellet, including Marsé (see Jordan 1990, 61-64 & 84-101; Labanyi 1995, 295-96).

3. For an in-depth account of this complex grouping, the way it positioned itself in reaction to

However, Marsé also later rejected what he called ‘testimonial’ literature in favour of a concern with the process of narration itself, what he terms ‘literatura de ficción’ (Sherzer 1985, 31-32 & 13-18), yet without ever subscribing to a particular theory of writing, as is discussed in Chapter Four. Similarly, Simon never fully or unproblematically assumed the *nouveau romancier* label. According to Britton, what he shared with the *nouveau roman* writers was both a rejection of Sartrean committed writing and a desire to break with the form of the nineteenth-century realist novel. Despite the movement’s influence on his most formalist novels of the nineteen seventies, his attitude to the group’s theoretical manifestations remained ambivalent, and his writing has always had a strongly representational strand. In all Simon’s texts, with the exception of the seventies novels (see Britton 1993, 9) the focus is on the experiences of a narrating subject, and on the narrativisation of these experiences, represented as determined by temporal relationships (see Britton 1993, 11-13).⁴

Sartre’s views on political commitment and his model of language, and their later involvement with poststructuralist Marxism in *Tel Quel*, see Britton 1989, 65-96, especially 67-71.

4. See also Brewer 1995, who argues that Simon rejects narrative representation when the latter is understood as ‘a general order and the order of the general that permeates all discourse, language and representation’ (xiii). Simon sees narrative in this sense as ‘a powerful agent of some of the most violent events to which an individual in twentieth-century history, society and culture is subject: those of dogmatism, terror and ideology’ (xii), a point which is central to his critique of revolution, as will be seen. This view of ‘general narrative orders’ as inherently oppressive can be likened to Barthes’s view of mimesis as ‘doxa’ and as such is open to the kind of critique made by Prendergast and outlined below. However, Brewer argues that Simon does not abandon representation or narratives altogether, but rather ‘dismantles’ them in order to explore the terms of their production (xix). Like other contemporary or ‘postmodern’ writing, his writing should thus be read in terms of its ‘figures of narrativity’. What is particularly interesting for this thesis in Brewer’s analysis is that reading for ‘narrativity’ as opposed to ‘narrative’ does not mean focusing on a purely formalistic analysis of micro-textual properties. It is defined as ‘using the displacing tactics of the particular to dislodge general narrative orders when these function as coercive instruments in the service of power and mystification’ (xiii) and central to this process is the notion that narrative figures always carry ‘cultural legacies’. According to Brewer ‘narrative paradigms and their cultural legacies are all important for understanding a text’s figuration of relationships to others, environments, time, objects, events and actions’ (xix) and narrativity ‘[cannot] be elaborated outside powerful, historical, social and cultural realities’ (xxxiii; see also xxxiv). In other words, narrativity is a way of reclaiming a cultural, social and historical, that is, referential context to writing and reading, although for Brewer the ‘connections’ or meanings generated by such a reading process are potentially infinite (xvi). Where this thesis takes issue with Brewer’s analysis is not with the general notion of a reading of Simon in terms of ‘narrativity’, but with the notion that his writing is concerned with ‘narrativity without narrative’. That is, with the notion that his own narratives do not contain a ‘universalising narrative’ on revolution, political engagement and, ultimately, historical progress.

Narrative Form in the Novels

Chapters One and Three explore how the two apparently contradictory strands, realist and anti-realist, manifest themselves within Simon's representation of the Civil War. The novels discussed are not his most formalist, as underpinning all three is a basically phenomenological realist discourse that privileges sensory experience, and above all visual perception.⁵ However, *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques* in particular contain 'anti-realist' elements and foreground their own textuality, although in different ways. *Le Palace* uses narrative fragmentation whereas the 'anti-realism' of *Les Géorgiques* is more striking on the thematic level. In the case of *Le Sacre*, where the text plainly does not involve the same questioning of realism, parts of the narrative are more characteristic of the kind of 'anti-realist' writing found in *Le Palace*.⁶ Yet despite the obvious differences between the narrative construction of the texts, the same kinds of metaphorical associations and representational content are found in all three.

Chapter One analyses principally *Le Palace*. Chapter Two analyses Marsé's representation of the War in *Si te dicen*, *Un día* and *El Embrujo* and compares it with Simon's. The comparison is both thematic and formal, focusing on the time period and events represented; the treatment of narrative time; the treatment of place and the representation of space; and narrative focalization and characterisation. The concept of narrative *focalization* and *focalizer* was originally formulated by Gérard Genette.⁷ My understanding of these terms is derived principally from Mieke Bal's *Introduction to the Theory of Narrative Practice*, where focalization is defined as 'the relation between the [narrative] vision and that which is "seen"' (1985, 100). Unlike the terms narrative 'perspective' or 'viewpoint', 'focalization' allows one to distinguish between 'the vision through which the elements are presented and, on the other, the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision' (1985, 101). Thus while the subject of the

5. In the more sophisticated psycho-analytic terms of her 1987 book Britton describes this as the articulation within Simon's texts of a desire for a 'discourse of the visible' (1987, especially 44-67 & 142-64).

6. For example, Bernard's interior monologue, the omission of commas and full stops, and the capitalization of third person pronouns when referring to his stepfather (cf. pp. 48-49). This break with normal rules of punctuation serves a different function in *Le Sacre*, however, since it is intended to convey Bernard's internal mental state, the kind of psychological *vraisemblance* found in many realist texts - which proves the weakness of purely formalist arguments.

7. See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by J. Culler, Oxford: Blackwell 1980.

vision or the point from which the elements are viewed, the focalizer, may be the same as the character participating in the action (internal focalization), the focalizer of the action might also be another, anonymous narrator located outside the fabula (external focalization).⁸ Because focalization constructs relations of knowledge, and therefore power, both within the fabula, between characters, and on the extra-fabular level between the meta-narrator and the reader, it is crucial to notions of narrative (un)reliability and authority, and is a major component in generating suspense in a narrative (see 1985, 106-18).

Chapter Two asks in particular whether Marsé's representation of the Spanish revolution is as negative as Simon's, and involves a similar critique of political *engagement* (discussed in more depth in Chapter Three in relation to *Les Géorgiques*). Can we detect in Marsé the 'political fatalism' Britton sees as originating in Simon's experiences in Spain (Britton 1993, 7)? This thematic question necessarily leads back to the question of the narrative form of *Si te dicen*, Marsé's most complex text. Where *Un día* and *El embrujo* present few impediments to a straightforward classical realist reading, *Si te dicen*'s convoluted, self-referring structure foregrounds processes of representation and narration to a quite different extent.

As is discussed in Chapters Two and Chapter Four, precisely because of its complex (or confusing?) narrative structure, the text undermines classical realist assumptions regarding narrative time, character and place and can be read as anti-realist (see Garvey 1980; Montenegro 1981; and Labanyi 1989).⁹ Nevertheless, this thesis argues that the text can equally be read referentially, and that its multi-layered narrative structure is formally homologous to the confused/confusing and ambiguous nature of reality in forties Spain (see Gould Levine 1979, 309; Garvey 1980, 386; and Amell 1984, 132-33). The revised edition of the novel in particular supports this view.¹⁰

8. Bal gives the following example from Doris Lessing: 'A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting. Thinking? She would not have said so [...] She was letting words and phrases as worn as nursery rhymes slide around her tongue'. Sentence one is focalized externally, but from sentence two on, the focalization shifts to internal (see 1985, 104-05).

9. Ignacio Soldevila Durante argues that because the novel requires a second reading in order to understand its 'primer nivel de significación' it crosses over the boundary between complexity and confusion (1989, 286-287).

10. Amell places *Si te dicen* within the same realist framework as *Un día* and *Ronda del Guinardó* as 'la triología de las víctimas de la guerra' (1984, 147). *Ronda* uses the same locations and character types (or actual characters) of the previous two novels, and portrays the same picture of 'injusticia, frustración y sordidez' (Amell 1984, 147). However, it is much less complex thematically and structurally than the two earlier novels (see Amell 1984, 146-59).

Narrative Form and Historical Representation

Both Marsé's and Simon's texts also suggest a particular view of history and/or historical discourse. Britton has highlighted 'the central and problematic status' that Simon's novels give to history (1993, 214) and his historical 'pessimism' (1993, 7). In narrative terms, both writers represent historical events as both repetitions or echoes of past events and/or prefigurations of future events, suggesting a complex causality which challenges the notion of history as diachronic progress from a secure point of origin. In *Le Palace*, for example, the relationship between past and present events, memory and experience is questioned: as in Simon's 1967 novel *Histoire* (not analysed in detail here), the fictionalisation of the Spanish War experience is such that, as Pugh comments '[e]vents do not occur in logical ways, and perception itself is a chaos of remembrance, imagining, and awareness of present sensations' (1982, 13).

Like Simon, Marsé is explicitly concerned with historical memory, and his work has been regarded as a form of oblique historiography. Much of his writing describes the repression and injustice of the Franco dictatorship, particularly during the 'años de hambre' and can be read as an alternative account of the period which challenges official nationalist discourse, as is discussed in Chapter Two.

Simon's view of history is linked to his critique of political *engagement* and to the rejection of a certain model of realist writing, foregrounded most explicitly in *Les Géorgiques* in his critical reworking of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. This is discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four explores how Marsé's representation of the war period and the *posguerra* highlights issues of narrative perspective, authority and reliability as regards the construction of both fictional and historical discourse particularly in relation to *Si te dicen* and *La muchacha*. However, it also asks whether the same radical rejection of the realist premises of historical narrative as is found in Simon can be detected in Marsé's texts, and to what extent Marsé's critique of historiographical discourse can be related to the historical context of Francoism.

Realism and Anti-Realism: a Critical Framework

Before proceeding, however, the question of narrative 'realism' or 'anti-realism' needs to be placed within a wider theoretical framework, that of the critique of literary realism

within poststructuralist French theory. The use of the term ‘classical’ or ‘realist’ texts in this thesis refers to this poststructuralist critique, and not to the more diffuse critique of realism developed (albeit in the wake of French post-structuralism’s ideology of suspicion) in Anglo-American criticism by critics influenced by Althusserian and psycho-analytical cultural theory.¹¹ The now widely-used term ‘classical realism’ in fact belongs to the latter. Catherine Belsey (for instance 1980, 70-73) traces the critique of ‘[c]lassic realist narrative’ (1980, 70) back to *S/Z*, yet Roland Barthes himself never refers to ‘classic’ or ‘classical’ realism, only to the ‘texte classique’ (for instance 1970, pp. 14, 20, 211-12) or the ‘auteur classique’ (1970, 180).

My understanding of literary realism is principally informed by Barthes, and by Christopher Prendergast’s lucid and persuasive account of the ‘semiological attack’ on realism in *The Order of Mimesis* (1986). All the nuances of this critique, and of Prendergast’s counter-critique, cannot be addressed here - indeed, any discussion of literary realism entails entering an ‘epistemic labyrinth’ (Prendergast 1986, 213). However, this section attempts to outline Prendergast’s main argument in order to provide a more solid theoretical grounding for the close textual analysis.

Prendergast begins by describing how mimetic concepts of writing and reading have become discredited in the wake of structuralism and post-structuralism. In the most influential account, Barthes’s *S/Z*, mimesis is represented as ‘a rhetorical trick designed to mark the arbitrary character of the literary sign’ (Prendergast 1986, 2). The Barthesian and post-Barthesian approaches generally attack the *expressive* (text to author) and *mimetic* (text to world) relations of the text, foregrounding instead the *pragmatic* (text to audience) and *objective* (text to itself as an ‘autonomous’ object) functions of the text. The ‘pragmatic’ relation is defined as the cultural ‘codes’ through which the reader makes sense of the text; and the ‘objective’ as the text engaged in ‘self-reflexive scrutiny of its own fabricated reality, its specific process of construction and, under certain conditions, “deconstruction”’ (1986, 3).¹²

11. Principal exponents being Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, 1980 (see for example pp. 67-84; 112-17), and Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism*, 1979.

12. See also Brewer’s account of the ‘era of suspicion’ of representation (1995, xix-xxxv), and what she characterizes as the two opposing tendencies which developed in its wake, namely the ‘abandon[ment] of narrative in favour of so-called non-narrative models’ or the move ‘to generalize [narrative] as a global metaphor for cognition or representation’ (xxiv). Ricœur, on whose thinking Prendergast principally draws, would presumably fall into the latter camp.

Prendergast tries both to explain the resistance to mimesis, and to overcome it, by exploring the conceptual ambiguity of the double sense of the word 'order': that is, mimesis as 'both a set of arrangements and a set of commands'. It is the latter sense of the term which is rejected by French post-structuralism, where mimesis is seen as stressing hegemonic 'values of imitation and repression' or 'submission to the set of symbolic arrangements (the mimetic 'plot') as if this corresponded to the natural order of things' (1986, 5). According to Jean-François Lyotard's account in *La Condition postmoderne* (1979) and especially in *Le Différend* (1983), the 'logical matrix' of mimesis combines statements that are descriptive, prescriptive and normative (1986, 6). Mimesis is thus seen within Lyotard's (representative) account as authoritarian because it effects a closure on the process of interpretation.

Correspondingly, those texts that rebel against this repressive order, using 'the aesthetics of *defamiliarization*', are regarded as the most valuable. However, according to Prendergast, Lyotard's account ignores the flipside of mimesis as grounded in 'the principle of negotiating and naming the world in terms of familiar, shared images and representations'. Mimesis is a recognitive process that is 'fundamentally bound to all organised forms of human practice' (1986, 7), even if it sometimes involves hegemonic misrepresentations.¹³ The most useful way to consider mimesis is as a 'limit' which both 'invites a crossing' but which by the same token cannot be crossed (1986, 8).

In fact, mimesis as a concept is historically unstable. Apart from the modern, Barthesian version, it was also defined negatively by Plato. However, whereas for Barthes mimesis is an essentially *conservative* force, in Plato's *Republic* it is politically *subversive* because it epitomises the human ability for making and fabricating, which undermines laws of identity and differentiation, introducing the possibility of forgery. This reveals the non-natural or man-made nature of the city's hierarchical categories and, by extension, of its social arrangements. The positive aspect of the modern semiological critique, according to Prendergast, is precisely its intuition that mimetic representations are based on initial, historically-determined choices and description of the ways in which, through 'signifying play' certain texts can challenge mimetic readings. On the other hand, it begs the question of why, if mimesis is so intellectually disreputable, the concept persists.

13. Prendergast is particularly interested in Bourdieu's notion of 'practice' (developed in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977) since although a non-reflexive process, it is not simply

Barthes: Realism as *doxa*

According to Prendergast, the semiological critique is both logically flawed and politically regressive. The main contention of Barthes's critique of 'classical' texts (developed principally in his 1968 article 'L'effet de réel', and later in *S/Z*) is that the mimetic text is a tool of ideological oppression. Its code of *vraisemblance* draws upon and uncritically reinforces the enthymemes which make up *doxa* or naturalised bourgeois ideology. The 'logic of naturalisation' which Barthes, and later theorists such as Lyotard and Derrida, wish to unmask is the realist text's masking of the fact that it refers not to an extra-linguistic reality but an already encoded version of it. As Barthes says: 'ce qu'il y a derrière le papier, ce n'est pas le réel, le référent, c'est la Référence, la *subtile immensité des écritures*' (1970, 129). Referential codes, as 'écritures', are not fixed or 'natural'. Yet, as a form of common social knowledge that goes unremarked precisely because it is unremarkable, they are both 'subtile', and enormously powerful.¹⁴

In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1972), Barthes argues that the modern realist novel uses two basic narrative elements: the past historic tense and the third person singular (Valéry's famous example is the sentence 'La marquise sortit à cinq heures'; Barthes 1972, 27). The latter provide a diegetic frame or boundary for the characters's dialogues, descriptions, thoughts and storytelling. According to Prendergast, Barthes sees the past historic as 'the term of narrative mastery, one of the grammatical means for converting "life" into "destiny", for ordering the past as meaningful pattern from a position of masterful retrospect' (1992, 240). This point is significant, in that it links the notion of causality found in historical narrative with the kind of narrative linkage found in literary realism, as is discussed in Chapters Three and Four. In Chapter One, it will be seen that Simon's main objection to realism is the (for him *invraisemblable*) linear construction of the realist plot.

In *S/Z*, the realist or *lisible* text is contrasted to Barthes's ideal text, the *scriptible*. In fact, the term *texte scriptible* is an oxymoron, since it is not a particular

limited to the passive reiteration of hegemonic structures and representations (1986, 7 & 74).

14. What this formula does not convey is the disgust such 'common sense' or *doxa* inspires in Barthes; it is 'écœurante', 'étouffante'. The realist text is 'guettée mortellement par l'armée des stéréotypes qu'elle porte en elle' (1970, 211, my emphasis) and hence irredeemable.

object, but a process or even an image of infinity (a 'présent perpétuel', 1970, 11). *Lisible* and *scriptible* are defined by the different reader relation they involve. The *scriptible* 'text' defies any form of closure on the process of signification (1970, 12); it is by its very nature absolutely plural and, as such, cannot be constituted as a readable text, so can have no 'readers', as conventionally understood. Again, leaving aside the paradox, this is what constitutes its positive value for Barthes. In approaching the *scriptible* text the reader is not merely passively accepting or rejecting the text's underlying meaning or message. Her desire is engaged actively, since it is she who must produce meaning(s). Thus for Barthes the *scriptible* has a politically radical function: it transforms the reader from a passive consumer into an active producer of the text (1970, 11).

Barthes appears to see *all* representation as oppressive, as grounded in (mis)recognitions and hence in *doxa*. Yet how could any form of representation function without a process of closure or reader recognition taking place? As Prendergast argues, even defamiliarization or deconstruction only work by reference to a prior code of 'readability', one ultimately grounded in shared terms of reference between writers and readers. In other words, to reject the 'responsibility of interpretation' is stop being a reader (1986, 230). While mimetic, familiar images and representations do indeed effect closure on the 'field of signification', they are 'arguably indispensable to any conceivable social reality' (1986, 16).¹⁵

Prendergast also questions Barthes's basic concept of the 'effet de réel' or 'reality effect'. According to Barthes, the realist text dupes the reader into believing it refers to a real world by mimicking the referring properties of ordinary language. In a realist narrative aiming to produce an effect of *vraisemblance*, descriptive details usually serve as an index of character or atmosphere. Yet realist narratives also contain instances of descriptive detail which have neither a symbolic nor thematic function - trivial gestures, insignificant objects, or superfluous dialogue. Barthes's by now (in)famous example, cited in his 1968 article, is the description of Madame Aubain's barometer in Flaubert's *Un Cœur simple*.

15. This can be illustrated by an example from *Sarrasine* itself. Sarrasine dies because he relies on endoxal knowledge, inferring falsely from Zambinella's appearance and behaviour, according to a stereotypical code of femininity, that the castrato is a woman. Nevertheless, it could equally be argued that he dies because he does not possess the correct 'Vérité endoxale', the right cultural code ('le code des mœurs papales'), as Barthes himself highlights (1970, 190).

It is this descriptive residue which produces a 'reality effect'. Such details do not so much *denote* a concrete reality, since their contingent content or signified is unimportant: what they signify is in fact that *category* of things which supposedly do not signify but simply 'are' - 'la categorie du réel' (Barthes 1968, 88). The concrete detail is thus intended not to *signify* the referent, but to *be* the referent, thus creating the illusion that the referent itself is directly present. It exists to reassure the reader that the text refers to, or produces, a recognizable world and, according to Barthes, the reality effect is the cornerstone of modern literary realism (1968, 89).

However, the concept is problematic. Firstly, how does one decide which notations are 'non-functional'? According to Prendergast, given that references to the weather occur frequently in Flaubert's texts, and that 'weather in Flaubert's Normandy is predictably boring', the barometer could signify 'the Futile' (1986, 64). Secondly, and more importantly, the concept itself is logically flawed. Prendergast questions two aspects of Barthes's account of reference in *L'effet de réel*. Firstly, the use of the metaphors of 'collusion' and 'expulsion' to describe the 'referential illusion' ('la collusion directe d'un signifiant et d'un référent; le signifié est expulsé du signe') and, secondly, the use of personification for the 'reality effect' ('nous sommes le réel') (1986, 70).

In the latter case, Barthes implies that the language of the realist text tries to make itself 'disappear', that 'the sign effaces itself before its "referent"' (Prendergast 1986, 70-71). This is untenable, since it suggests the reader is unaware that she is reading, or in some kind of hallucinatory state preventing her from realizing she is faced not with the object itself but with a rhetorical category (1986, 71). In the former, 'collusion' and 'expulsion' have conspiratorial connotations which suggest that there is a 'guilty party' behind the expulsion of meaning from the sign. According to Prendergast, no philosopher of reference today would accept Barthes's definition of a direct movement from signifier to referent (1986, 71). In Frege's influential theory, for instance, there can be no reference without the mediating category of 'sense' ('signifié').¹⁶

16. In fact, Barthes seems aware his notion is problematic, as for instance when he concludes that the modern form of *vraisemblance* is founded on the paradoxical notion that it is possible to do away with the tripartite nature of the sign: 'pour faire de la notation la pure rencontre d'un objet et de son expression' (1968, 89). In attempting this, modern realism calls into question the very concept of representation itself.

Prendergast sees this ‘blind spot’ in Barthes’ theory as emblematic of a generalized resistance in semiological theory to the referentiality of language. As elaborated in *S/Z*, ‘the semiological way with reference in fictional language is to re-define it in terms of the workings of a code of representation and signification’ (1986, 65). What the fictional text refers to is not external reality but to an already-encoded ‘representation’ of that reality. However, Barthes is *not* just arguing, as for instance Searle does, that fictional discourse ‘pretends’ to do what non-fictional discourse *actually* does. He is arguing the far more philosophically radical idea that ‘we should reject (as “illusory”) any assumption of a referring relation obtaining between language and the world in any discursive context whatsoever’ (1986, 66).

The origins of this rejection are to be found in the seminal theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and C.S. Peirce. In Saussure’s account of language, according to Prendergast, language is ‘an autonomous, internally regulated system; the sense of signs is determined within the system by means of their relation with other signs, and not referentially in terms of an assumed relation with an external reality’. Similarly, in Peirce’s theory of *interpretants*: ‘signs acquire their meanings as the result of a process of semiotic interpretation, in which other signs act as interpretants to previous signs’ (1986, 67). Thus semiologists regard the ‘referential relation’ in mimesis not as one of ‘word to thing’ or ‘text to world’ but one of ‘text to text’ or ‘representation to representation’:

Literally, as Julia Kristeva reminds us [the *vraisemblable*] means ‘resembling the true’ (and not [...] ‘resembling the real’). The “true” is a property not of the world but of propositions about the world. It is a discursive not a ‘natural’ category, and thus the relationship which any text maintains with it is strictly inter-discursive’ or [...] ‘intertextual’. (1986, 68)

The discourse of which mimesis tries to produce a true semblance is defined not in scientifically or philosophically rigorous terms but as the ‘belief systems of a given culture’ – or, in Barthes’s lexis, *doxa*. After arguing the historicity of *doxa*, the next step is to argue the possibility of an endless chain of representations for which there is ‘no founding or “original” moment’. This is the perspective explored in the work of Derrida, where ‘all possibility of a final or settled relationship between language and the world is [...] permanently “deferred”’ (Prendergast 1986, 67-68).

Thus the issue of reference is the crux of the mimesis debate, and the semiological rejection of reference fundamentally undermines the possibility of literary mimesis. However, there are significant problems with the semiological account that can lead to an idealism of language as pure 'form'. The basic logical point about the arguments of Barthes (and Derrida) is their inherently paradoxical nature. That is, if what they have to say about reference is true, then their statements on the subject 'refer' to something that is the case: 'even to maintain the identity of a code presumes some component of reference: that which designates the elements of a code as belonging together' (1986, 69).

Prendergast suggests there are other theories of language which do not posit 'naive' (or commonsensical) versions of reference, his main candidate being Wittgenstein and his concept of 'language games':

The problem of reference (in the sense of uniquely experienced and identified particulars, such as "private" identifications of redness in relation to the colour term "red") is displaced [in Wittgenstein's theory] into the field of "meaning", in its broadly Fregean sense of publicly shared semantic categories. What is known, and knowable, by a community of speakers who are, at once and indissociably, players of a language game and participants in a form of life. (1986, 73)

Prendergast likens the language game to the semiological notion that the referent is the product of the operation of a cultural carving-up of the world, but argues that Wittgenstein's theory avoids the idealism of Saussurean semiology by seeing language first and foremost as 'a medium of social practice' (1986, 73). This pragmatic approach means that, since the social context of language use is what counts, the process of semiosis cannot be unbounded. Although the 'rules for the production of meaning' within a particular community of speakers are not 'natural' but socially constructed and 'maintained by means of public agreements', there must *be* such rules or limits in order for the game to be played (1986, 73). There can be different literary 'games' including the 'rule-breaking' game of defamiliarization in modernist literature and theory, but there are limits to such a game beyond which it becomes unintelligible or unmanageable.

Finally, he returns us to Aristotle's *Poetics*, where 'recognition' or *anagnorisis* is one of the constitutive rules of the mimetic language game. Thus, according to Prendergast, there is in mimetic literature a 'general process of reminding' whose

function is to ‘reinstall us in a world that is familiar’ (1986, 73). The danger of the modernist desire to sever all links between literary language and everyday language, and of the concomitant insistence on the ‘autonomy’ of the text, is that it can lead to a dangerously ahistorical view of literary production and reception (Prendergast 1986, 73).

The Critique of History

The debate over reference in literary realism is also directly linked to theoretical debates about the status of history as a ‘text’. Simon’s critique of Orwell in *Les Géorgiques* is interesting to consider within this wider context of ‘textualist’ debates over the nature and status of historiography. The epistemological presupposition on which a certain (abstract) conception of literary realism is, according to the semiological critique, based - the notion of language as somehow ‘transparent’ - is transferred onto to an (equally abstract) conception of historical discourse. The latter purportedly occludes the fact that it deals with a category (‘the past’) which cannot, in fact, be comprehended outside or beyond linguistic and rhetorical structures. For instance, in *Poststructuralism and the Question of History* (1987), Geoff Bennington and Robert Young cite the way Derrida questions ‘history’ as a self-evident category because of its own historicity as discourse or the realisation of what Derrida terms ‘language as the origin of history’. Developing this point further in his discussion of the eurocentric nature of western historical discourse, Young argues that, as a discursive construct, history is ‘subject to the whole range of questions that surround interpretation, representation and narrative in any form’ (1990, 22). Here, historical understanding becomes a matter for hermeneutics.

Chapter Three explores how a semiological suspicion of representation seems to inform Simon’s rejection of the Enlightenment ‘meta-narrative’ of historical progress. As Britton suggests, Simon’s rejection of historical narrative is closely bound up with his aesthetic and epistemological objections to literary realism. The critique of historiography that is found in *Les Géorgiques* is, at least in part, ‘one particular and extreme form of the question[ing?] of representational writing in general’ (1987, 162).¹⁷

17. However, Britton sees it as over-simplistic to equate history and representation in Simon’s

The term ‘meta-narrative’, as used in this thesis, originates in Lyotard’s *La Condition postmoderne* (1979, 7), which explicitly links ‘les grands récits’ or ‘les métarécits’ (1979, 7) to ‘le récit des Lumières, où le héros du savoir travaille à une bonne fin éthico-politique, la paix universelle’ (ibid). The historian Keith Jenkins also describes a meta-narrative historical approach as being:

a way of looking at the past in terms that assigned to contingent events and situations an objective significance by identifying their place and function within a general schema of historical development usually construed as appropriately ‘progressive’. (1995, 8)

Jenkins also uses the term ‘upper case’ history as an alternative to meta-narrative, and in the sphere of modern English historiography he identifies the ‘meta-narrative’ or upper-case approach with the work of Edward Carr.¹⁸ In *Les Géorgiques*, the concrete case of an ‘upper case’ narrative alluded to is Michelet’s triumphalist *Histoire de la Révolution française* (see Orr 1993, 161).

For Jenkins, the discourses of both upper and lower-case history are based on precisely their misrecognition of their intrinsic discursive status as ‘an ideological-interpretive discourse without any “real” access to the past as such’ (1995, 9). The self-evidence of Jenkin’s characterisation of the state of historical discourse must be questioned, not least because of its implied epistemological relativism. It is these kind of questions and wider intellectual context that underpin the discussion of Simon’s critique of historical writing in *Les Géorgiques*, and of Marsé’s representation of the Francoist historiographer in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

texts because Simon’s discursive regime is not constituted solely by an anti-representational aesthetic but also contains representational elements.

18. However, Jenkins’s term ‘upper case narrative’ is not cognate with Lyotard’s ‘meta narrative’. Lyotard is referring specifically to the Enlightenment tradition while Jenkins’s term also covers the normative claims of conservative or anti-progressive historical meta-narratives. His critique is aimed equally at what he terms ‘lower-case’ or ‘own-sakist’ history (for instance, the empiricist historical work of Geoffrey Elton), which he regards as just as ideological.

Chapter One

Introduction

This Chapter begins with a formal reading of *Le Palace*, focusing on: (i) the plot; (ii) the setting; (iii) the use of characterisation; and, (iv) finally, the treatment of narrative time, including the use of focalization. It then discusses the text's use of intertextual references. The aim of this reading is to explore how the text works to blur the referential relation with the historical moment of the Civil War, in other words, paradoxically, to produce an 'anti-realist' representation of the War.

However, as Carroll argues, 'no representation is ever really free of the historical-philosophical heritage it carries on within it, even as it claims to break with it' (1982, 110).¹ This Chapter argues that, despite the text's decontextualizing effects, it is still possible to distinguish certain themes, and in particular a certain authorial attitude towards Barcelona and its inhabitants. The representation of Barcelona is inextricable from that of the Spanish revolution, and it is primarily through the representation of Barcelona as the revolutionary city *par excellence* that the text expresses its critical attitude towards the revolution. This critical vision originates in and reinforces a particular vision of the workings of historical processes, which, in turn, is partly determined by an attempt to produce a historical representation that actually deconstructs conventional historical narrative. The latter part of the chapter therefore consists of a reading of the text in relation to the themes of revolution, historical vision, and historiography versus fiction. However, the principal discussion of these themes takes place in Chapter Three, in relation to Simon's more sophisticated and thematically complex text, *Les Géorgiques*.

Narrative Events

As a war narrative, *Le Palace* appears immediately iconoclastic. Its 'plot' is constituted not by action but inaction. Similarly to *Le Sacre de printemps* - and

significantly dissimilarly to his named intertexts, *L'Espoir* and *Homage to Catalonia* - the text contains no descriptions of the experiences of soldiers on or off the battlefield. In *Le Sacre*, the narrative is structured around the rivalry between the arms smugglers culminating in the murder of Ceccaldi. There is a reference to contemporary events in the discussion of the fighting around Lérida (p. 178), but this is recounted second-hand by Suñer. Even in *Les Géorgiques*, where the civil war episodes are structured partly around O.'s experiences at the Front, the text is principally concerned with the May fighting in Barcelona and its aftermath.

What, therefore, are the main events in *Le Palace*? In the second section, the Paris assassination; in the third section, the funeral procession of General Santiago; and, in the final section, the student's search for the American, who has disappeared or been disappeared. According to Simon, the different sections of the text are intended to function symmetrically, and there is also an obvious symmetry between the three events. Two are murders carried out in the name of political ideology, and the third, the disappearance, is also linked to the poisonous political atmosphere of the time.²

On one level, all these events refer to the inter-factional fighting among the Popular Front coalition. If we take the second 'event' depicted in *Le Palace*, the funeral procession, this could be a transposition of Durruti's funeral after his murder in November 1936, an event which Hugh Thomas regards as signalling the end of 'the classic age of Spanish anarchism' (Sykes, 1983, p. 130).³ However, the identity of General Santiago, his political affiliations, and the political significance of his murder are not made explicit in the text. The text hints at the existence of deep-rooted animosities, which are merely suspended for the time period of the funeral, in the allusions to the different

1. Brewer also argues that 'the critique of narrative in Simon's writing is founded on particular figures of sociality, material and symbolic culture, and history' (1995, xiv).

2. Simon is anxious to stress the novel's symmetrical principle both in the repetition of narrative macro- and micro-sequences, and the organisation and the headings of the chapters. See Simon 1986, 69.

3. The *Entretiens* special issue on Simon contains a photograph (given by Simon) in which the words on the banner are visible as 'QUIEN HA MUERTO A DURRUT...' (1972, 64-65). Durruti's funeral was characterized by what Graham calls a 'mythologizing, quasi-religious aura' (1999, 523), and a cult grew up around him as 'the fallen warrior and martyr' (ibid). He thus makes good target for Simon's anti-heroic discourse on the revolution.

dresscodes of mourners who, on the surface, are united in their grief.⁴ However, the socio-political context to this event and the others in the novel, is erased: there are no overt references to historically-real organisations, movements and personalities, to the ideological conflict between Nationalists and Republicans or to the divisions on the Republican side.

Moreover, like the assassination and the disappearance, the description of the funeral gives it an unreality or a dreamlike quality: the solemn pomp of the occasion contrasts the undignified manner of the general's death and the banality of his final resting place. In particular, the text suggests his death and the popular reactions of grief and anger it provokes are both futile (for instance, the crowd moves forward aimlessly, pp. 103-106). There are also distancing elements of fantasy and farce: the student imagines coffin and horse floating up into the air, like a child's toy 'dans une apothéose funèbre et féérique' (p. 104).⁵

Equally, in the narration of the other two main 'events', the reader is given no clue as to the identities or motivations of the participants, and the outcome remains inconclusive. Who is the target of the assassination? Has the American really 'disappeared'? Obviously the most pressing question left unanswered in all three events is: 'Why has this happened?' This lack of explanatory reference is not just confined to the political context. Apart from the lack of historical and cultural indices, the fact that the narrative focuses almost exclusively on subjective perceptual experience also renders events incomprehensible and makes them appear random. The focalization principally through the student and through the memories of the older, frame narrator, acts further to distance and de-contextualize events. In the case of the funeral, for instance, the event is explicitly focalized through the student watching from on high with the other *brigadistas* on the balcony.

In the Paris assassination, not only are we given no information as to the assassin's or the victim's identity, and little as to the former's motivations,

4. As epitomized by the official photograph of the government (see pp. 115-16 & pp. 136-37). In the few allusions to the Barcelona government, it is portrayed as hopelessly ineffectual, although the fact that it was the result of a compromise between groupings with completely different ideological origins and political aims is not explained. In particular, the President is described as having an air of weariness, perhaps echoing the representation of the 'maître d'école' (see p. 116 & p. 137).

5. See Brewer 1995 on how the main events in the novel are 'accompanied by their reiterative versions, which are inevitably parodic and theatrical' (89).

but description takes place at the micro-level of the physical, and particularly visual, perceptions of the participants. The text mentions the Italian's awareness of his empty stomach, his physical frailty, and the unsuitability of his thin clothing, representing him as a pathetic and insignificant figure within an alienating cityscape (pp. 47-55). In addition, the reader is forced to experience the event at the level of the Italian's limited perceptual field. The assassination is related as a series of seemingly disjointed yet often simultaneously-perceived movements, sounds and images, where the Italian's perceptions are explicitly compared to speeded-up filmic images (for instance, pp. 73-74).

Apart from defamiliarizing meta-allusions to film as a fictional medium (p. 90) and to the theatre (p. 94), the text also uses cinematographic techniques, such as zooms and close-ups on patterns of shapes and colours. In addition, narrative time is represented, as experienced by the Italian, as alternately fast-forwarded and in slow motion (see p. 90). What is emphasized are not only the Italian's feelings of unreality, but also the episode's comical, Chaplinesque quality (p. 97). In this manner, Simon literally limits the reader's field of vision and denies her any overview of the action. On the semantic level, the event appears isolated, unrelated to prior or subsequent events in the text. Rather than making the reader identify with the Italian, the focalization of the incident through him actually denies his account any transcendence: each stage of the action is described in spatial terms by verbally sketching the layout of the restaurant. The effect is to reduce the actions, and the human actors, to the level of abstract geometrical figures. Despite the elements of pathos, and the focalization of the actual moment of the assassination through the Italian, the account is also framed by the vision of an external narrator identifiable as the student. He appears an unwilling and ironizing recipient of the Italian's confession, and the narrative flow of the story is also broken by present-time references to their train journey and hair-raising taxi ride through Barcelona.

In the funeral procession, external narrative focalization is similarly distancing, even if the perspective is the opposite (instead of a series of close-ups, we have a bird's-eye view). The first view of the procession describes it as 'quelque chose d'encore indistinct, confus et sombre' (103): then the camera-eye zooms in on the open hearse and heavily-decorated horses. However, again,

the focalization through the student offers the reader no clue that would enable her to fit events into a wider historical context. This subjective-realist technique could be designed to convey the confusion and the surreality of the situation in revolutionary Barcelona. It can also be related to Simon's stated aim of producing not an autobiographical narrative but a 'dreamlike' text (as discussed below). However, the immediate effect of the focus on individual subjective vision is to strip the narrative action of any wider, inter-subjective context and meaning.

In fact, the student's physical distance from the events unfolding below symbolises his intellectual distance from the politics of revolutionary Barcelona: he is an alienated, uncomprehending witness to the procession, unable to empathize with the grieving crowds. Moreover, such events are represented as static *tableaux*, just as individual perception is represented as a series of monadic moments with no discernible connections and no unifying narrative thread. This is determining for the vision of history expressed in the text, as stated below.

Finally, the syntax and imagery used to describe narrative events foreground circularity and repetition, rather than linear progression or connection. Most sentences in *Le Palace* contain numerous relative clauses and parentheses, and images are repeated (for example, images from the funeral recur throughout the novel). This parallels the text's overall structure and thematics, where the fruitless search for the disappeared American is itself a repetition of the (implied) search for Santiago's assassin(s), structured round the recurring question: '¿Quién ha muerto a Santiago?' (p.111). This in turn echoes another repeated question, the 'comment était-ce?' of the narrator's existential search for the truth of his past.

All three searches are explicitly linked to the question of the origins of the cycle of violence that dominates the city. However, Simon self-consciously parodies the hermeneutic structure of the detective novel: events remain opaque and questions do not lead to answers. Both the student's search for the American and, on a meta-level, the narrator's search for his past are fruitless, ending not with the resolution of the hermeneutic code but with the creation of further enigmas. In contrast to *Le Palace*, with the inconclusive disappearance

of the American, in the more realist narrative of *Le Sacre* the stepfather's story ends with a clear *dénouement*: Ceccaldi's murder. However, even in the latter's more conventionally realist narrative, the murder is never solved and the motive for it remains unclear.⁶ Yet both narratives end with the disappearance of the character closest to the student, and the disappearances are explicitly linked to the political turmoil depicted in the texts.

Setting

Along with a lack of historical and political contextualisation, *Le Palace* contains few explicit geographical and cultural references. The same is not true of *Le Sacre* and *Les Géorgiques*. Léon Roudiez argues that in *Le Sacre* concrete temporal and geographical references serve the demands of a realist narrative reinforcing, firstly, the story's time frame⁷ and, secondly, its thematics, as the narrative is structured around the generational conflict between Bernard and his stepfather (1985, 47).⁸ In *Le Palace*, such referents are disrupted to the extent that the narrative omits street-names or the names of famous landmarks, and the identity of the city is never made explicit. When such indices *are* given, it is often in the form of an inserted list, which does not so much contextualize narrative action as disrupt it.

On the other hand, although geographical and cultural references in *Le Palace* are veiled, rather than representing the city as a purely mythical locus, the text does leave open the possibility of contextualization via the intra-textual allusions to the city's general features and specific landmarks and symbols.⁹ These allusions are not overt enough for the general reader to identify Barcelona as opposed to any other real - or fictional - Spanish city: such

6. The student's account suggests that Nationalist, rather than Republican (presumably communist), agents are responsible, unlike in *Le Palace*. On the other hand, it is implied that Suñer, if not involved directly, knew Ceccaldi was in danger and failed to warn him, thus playing an indirect role in the murder. See pp. 162-63, 201-02 and 177.

7. For instance, *Le Sacre* uses precise dates to refer to the three sections. One exception is the name of the French port, which is omitted.

8. Apart from expressing generational differences, this conflict could also be given an oedipal interpretation. See Dällenbach on the 'Imaginaire parental' (1988, 53-67) and Carroll 1982, 37.

identification requires prior knowledge of the Civil War and (or) Simon's biography. Thus it is only by reading the novel as a *roman à clef* - by re-contextualizing it - that certain of its resonances appear. However, even when the reader *does* possess background knowledge, the text works rather to defamiliarize her.

In addition, *Le Palace* contains a wealth of descriptive notation of objects, an example being the lengthy description of the cigarbox in 'Dans la nuit' (see pp. 164-68). This kind of descriptive excess could be related to the text's phenomenological realism, connoting the continual perceptual flux - or, in 'Dans la nuit', more specifically, the almost paranoid perceptions - of the narrating subject. The prevalence of descriptions of objects can also be interpreted as an attempt to construct a discourse of the material, Dällenbach's 'écriture de l'élémentaire' (1988, 34). In his comparison of *Le Palace* and *L'Espoir*, Stuart Sykes also describes the 'concrete' nature of the writing, referring to a similar aesthetic (1983, 122-35).

However, the accumulation of descriptive detail ultimately has the effect of *breaking* any referential illusion since the text's exaggerated attention to material objects - particularly in *Dans la nuit* - results in the de-naturalisation of the description and in reader disorientation. The interspersed lists of objects - the kind of 'inventaire' that gives the first section of the novel its title - are similarly defamiliarizing. On one level, the opening inventory of the hotel room's contents and of the functional furniture and effects that are to replace its former luxurious trappings symbolizes the ascendancy of its new occupants, the party bureaucrats (pp. 10-16). However, on pp.10-16, because the focus is immediately on the material objects and because no human presence is detectable, the text seems to signal overtly its distance from the kind of realism where the emphasis is on characters, their psychological states and actions, and the causal links between the two. The mundanity of the contents of the inventory, and the sardonic reference to the 'conquérants-déménageurs' suggest the novel's principal concern is to record a defiantly unheroic and prosaic world. One obvious object of parody here might be Balzac, seen by French anti-

9. For example, the references to the city being a port, the street-names (p. 18), the statue of Colón (p. 84), and the Catalan flag (p. 108).

realist critics such as Barthes as the arch villain, and who, in his preface to *La Comédie humaine*, expresses his totalizing desire to describe or *inventorize* the whole of contemporary society.¹⁰

However, the content of the novel's descriptions of the prosaic object-world is not neutral, as they usually allude to material decay and degeneration. An intricate and overlapping network of organic images is used to represent Barcelona, which is overwhelmingly associated with death, decay, and disease. From the outset, the city's atmosphere is lugubrious and sinister, and the student's breakneck taxi-ride through deserted, nocturnal and rubbish-filled streets (p. 80) with a driver personified as death (p. 91) sets the novel's tone. In Section Four, his increasing feelings of alienation reach their apex, and objects such as the newspaper take on a life of their own. The headline about Santiago's murder triggers a feeling of existential 'nausée' that manifests itself as the impression of an overwhelming synaesthesia (pp. 159-62).

On p. 170, the student narrator compares the silence reigning in the city to that of a ghost town. The comparison of Barcelona with Pompeii, which recurs in *Les Géorgiques* (p. 324), implies the town has undergone a cataclysmic natural disaster and, moreover, one which has taken its inhabitants by surprise. However, there are frequent allusions to continuing processes of organic decay (the stench of latrines, rotting fruit and stale cooking oil); images which recur in *Les Géorgiques*. While functioning partly as realist notations, such references have strong symbolic overtones. They are first given a metaphorical twist by the American, who associates the stench in the city with human death via the image of the (undiscovered) rotting corpse of the Nationalist general (p. 170). In *Les Géorgiques*, the connection is made explicit (p. 226), although the stench is also extended to cover living human misery (p. 323).

10. Indeed, Balzac's refers to his desire to be 'l'archéologue du *mobilier* social' (my italics); see Balzac 1951, p. 7. He sees this kind of totalizing project as moving beyond fiction into the realm of history. Brewer argues that Simon's writing in general uses parody to 'reinvent the narrativity of [cultural and historical] discourses' (78) and thus deconstruct the didacticism of 'totalized systems of meaning' on which conventional narrative is based (80). He does so by foregrounding 'an attention to details, tangents, margins, remainders and excesses' (ibid).

The identification of Barcelona, the revolutionary city, with death and decay stands in direct opposition to those narratives of the revolution based around the construction of a brave new world through the heroic actions of its protagonists - the obvious model being *L'Espoir*. However, the city is still identified with death in those sequences concerning the narrator's return two decades later, and the distinction between Francoist Barcelona and revolutionary Barcelona is eroded by references to the city in both periods as a kind of giant museum or mausoleum (see the sequence on pp. 127-28). Again, the suggestion that, despite a surface appearance of animation and normality, the city and its inhabitants are spiritually dead is linked via the image of the mausoleum to their inability to exorcize the (revolutionary) past: they are both haunted by this past and are themselves ghosts.¹¹

Characterisation

This section will consider, firstly, the main characters in the Civil War episodes, and then the representation of the inhabitants of Barcelona. The section on Revolution below considers further how the triangular relationship between the three main characters in the novel is used to express a critique of political commitment through the theme of youthful disillusionment and the destruction of political idealism.

Le Palace contains little conventional description of the psychological states of its characters. The reader is given no explicit information as regards their age, social background, profession, political beliefs etc. from which to construct them as individuals who are temporally and spatially unique, or who have a distinct social identity. This process of 'de-individuation' is epitomized by the use of generic names for the 'protagonists'. Descriptive detail and dialogue are used to convey psychological characterisation and to represent inter-personal relationships. For instance, the Schoolmaster's physical appearance and his exchanges with the American and the student are used to connote his character: his voice, his drab appearance, and his implied lack of

11. See also the incident with the waiter and the prostitute, p. 22. Brewer comments that the images of ghosts or of simulacra are related to how the past is denied any meaningful

interest in aesthetics connote an almost sinister circumspection, an emotional deadness, and lack of imagination (see p. 38).

There is an obvious parallel with *Le Sacre* in the depiction of the triangular relationship between the main characters. Although in *Le Sacre* the action takes place in France, at one remove from the actual conflict in Spain, and concerns arms smugglers rather than *brigadistas*, it focuses on the same kind of group tensions and inter-subjective conflict.¹² In particular, the conflict between Ceccaldi and Suñer prefigures the animosity between the American and the Schoolmaster. Moreover, the American in *Le Palace* plays a similar role to Ceccaldi - that of the older man who educates the student in the ways of the world and disabuses him of his naive idealism. Like Ceccaldi and the student, he is a non-Spaniard, and is identified with a sceptical viewpoint on events in revolutionary Barcelona.

In *Le Sacre*, Ceccaldi the adventurer supports the anti-fascist cause but has no time for the moral scruples - or sentimentality - of 'amateurs' or party 'bureaucrats' like Suñer. His philosophy is summed up on pp. 156-57: this war is a racket like all other wars, and it is his cynical (or realistic) approach which proves most effective in smuggling arms.¹³ His attitude is attributed to, and reinforces, an aristocratic detachment from events and a sense of generalised disgust with himself and the world (pp. 173 and 148). At times, this translates into a kind of death-wish, a self-destructive impulse also associated with the American in *Le Palace*.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the student admires Ceccaldi's worldliness, and seems to regard even his nihilistic self-destructiveness as proof of his greater honesty.

This contrasts to his dislike of Suñer (p. 175), a dislike that prefigures the student's indifference to the Italian who recounts his tale of political assassination in *Le Palace* (although in *Le Sacre*, in fact, the student feels more sympathetic to Suñer hearing his war story, see p. 180). In contrast to the iconoclastic Ceccaldi, Suñer is associated with all forms of institutional

development in the novel (1995, 89).

12. The tale of the smugglers has an autobiographical basis. See Simon in Alphant 1985.

13. Suñer suggests that Ceccaldi's opportunism shows his Republican sympathies are not to be trusted: see p. 174.

14. Compare *Le Sacre*, p. 203 and *Le Palace*, pp. 102 and 120.

authority and its stereotypical associations of pettiness, moralism, and authoritarianism; ‘faisant penser [...] à quelque chose qui tenait à la fois du curé, du policier et de l’instituteur’ (p.143).

In other words, in *Le Sacre* Suñer is the embodiment of dogmatism, a dogmatism intensified by the war, and he rationalises his personal hatred for Ceccaldi as a matter of political principle (see p.160). However, dogmatism is critiqued through *ad hominem* criticism: Suñer is described as being of mediocre intellect; his colourlessness is contrasted with Ceccaldi’s charisma and his puritanism with the Italian’s sensuality (hence the brothel scene). The negative comparison even extends to their physical appearance (see pp. 143 and 160).¹⁵

It is not only in *Le Sacre* but also in *Le Palace*, and later in *Les Géorgiques*, that physical description of characters and the aesthetic judgements made upon them carry moral weight. The same kind of description is used in *Le Palace* in relation to the Schoolmaster. The latter expresses exasperation at the American’s continual questioning of the reality around him, and unhesitatingly supports the official party line. In particular, as will be seen later in the discussion of the representation of the Revolution, the representation of the Schoolmaster draws on clichéd notions of the party activist or bureaucrat as politically unscrupulous, yet on a personal level puritanical and emotionally repressed.¹⁶

15. Interestingly, Carroll thinks that Ceccaldi’s is idealized as the absolutely ‘demystified’ father figure and that this is also rooted in the young stepfather’s own (misplaced) desire for transcendence. In fact, Ceccaldi’s ‘privileged position’, the sceptical or cynical position of authentic inauthenticity (see Chapter Three, n. 19) is illusory because is not located outside the conflict taking place. Moreover, in essence it involves questioning ‘any and all idealizations, especially those governing one’s own position’. According to Carroll, ‘all presumed positions of neutrality and all attempts to transcend the conflictual structure of the novel are explicitly undermined from within or at least potentially underminable’ (1982, 45-48). The wider question of narrative indeterminacy in the novels as it effects the representation of the revolution and of historical ‘meta-narratives’ is discussed in Chapter Three. Suffice it to say that this thesis argues that Simon *does* posit the existence of a ‘meta-position’ on such events, and that the sceptical/cynical position *is* privileged both within *Le Sacre* and *Le Palace*: in the former, this is guaranteed by rendering Ceccaldi’s death heroic.

16. The unsympathetic representation of the Schoolmaster shares similar elements with the description of the Komintern agents in *Les Géorgiques*. The latter are more overtly and directly identified with totalitarian impulses and forces. However, there is a similar use of physical appearance to connote moral turpitude (see for instance, p. 341). See also the representation of the Communist Lambert in *Histoire*, who disapproves of the ‘romantic

The Schoolmaster is not an exact replica of Suñer since he embodies cautiousness, world-weariness, and emotional coldness (see pp. 207-8), whereas Suñer is characterized by his emotional outbursts. However, where the American's world-weariness is represented as the product of an ironizing, stoical perspective on worldly concerns and political machinations (pp. 138-39), the Schoolmaster's lassitude does not have the same urbane associations. Similarly, the American's indifference to sartorial concerns does not connote a 'lack of taste' and hence a dubious political morality. While the Schoolmaster's cynicism is portrayed negatively - as a willingness to misrepresent or conceal the truth for reasons of political expediency - the American's cynicism performs an important demasking function, and thus is represented as evidence of his underlying honesty and integrity.

On the other hand, it is suggested that the American's motives in joining the Republican struggle are far from pure. Like Ceccaldi, his ironic detachment and indifference to the consequences of his outspokenness are evidence of his self-destructiveness - or even of a death wish (see p. 102). His 'devil-may-care' attitude is symptomatic of his adventurism: his preference for death in action over the slow decay of old age (pp. 119-20) reveals one important facet of his motivation in remaining in a volatile political situation he characterises as absurd. However, in the light of Simon's dismissal of 'romans d'aventures' - a criticism he makes of his implicit intertext, *L'Espoir* - it is interesting that it is in fact the ostensibly anti-hero yet 'aventurier' figures, such as Ceccaldi and the American, who are represented most sympathetically.

If we consider the representation of the other characters who appear in the novel, such as the Italian, he is de-individualized by referring to him using generic terms such as 'l'Italien' and metonymies like 'l'homme-fusil'. In addition, his thought processes are represented as separated from his actions and gestures, and he appears to commit the assassination without being consciously in control of his actions. This implies that he is morally alienated by his act, which he himself represents as an external, demoniacal force (p. 78) working through him, and his verbalising of the crime is a form of exorcism.

bourgeois' spirit in which the young narrator goes off to run guns for the Republicans and who is described as having an 'air sévère et froid' (pp. 297-98).

However, the rest of the novel suggests that this exorcism is unsuccessful and that his violent acts have consumed him (see p. 155).¹⁷

As mentioned previously, the Italian is also represented as an object of pathos, but this effect is also achieved by shifting the accent from the mechanistic nature of his act to the notion that it is predetermined:

il ne ressentait d'indignation ni de colère [...] peut-être parce qu'il était au-delà du scandale et de la colère, que le scandale l'avait saisi, agressé une fois pour toutes des années auparavant [...] à partir de quoi, tout avait été résolu -comme d'autres résolvent tout à partir de l'idée de rédemption [...] ou de lois organiques —, peut-être aussi parce-qu'il possédait sans doute cette faculté de ceux pour qui le monde est partout et toujours le même (c'est-à-dire, une fois pour toutes aussi féroce, inhospitalier) et qui est comme le contraire de la faculté d'étonnement: et alors *cette espèce de souffreteuse et enfantine placidité*. (p.56, my italics. See also p. 99)

It appears here that the Italian's worldview (and actions) is rooted in an experience of *social* alienation, yet the text describes him not as a conscious agent but as passive and childlike. What is emphasized is precisely the immutability of both his environment and his inevitable response to it, as the unconscious plaything of a personified and abstract force of violence unleashed by the revolution, the product of circumstances which he is, ultimately, powerless to change. Thus the allusion to the social determinations of his political ideology, his resistance to social injustice, gives way to an assertion of his passivity in the face of that injustice. Thus the allusion to determinism ends up seeming more like fatalism.¹⁸

The technique used to describe the behaviour and appearance of the Italian extends to the inhabitants of Barcelona, the militiamen and the 'masses'. The crowds at the Funeral are represented as an unindividuated mass milling about the streets (see also pp. 330-31 of *Les Géorgiques*), or as 'des aveugles' (*Le Palace*, pp. 112-3), lacking the consciousness or will to take action.

17. According to Orr, the Italian is a later version of Ceccaldi, and is given a generic name to 'distanc[e] his personality from his narrative function' (1993, 172). However, apart from nationality, there are no thematic or structural parallels between the two characters: whereas the latter is identified with the discourse of the intellectual, the sceptical viewpoint on the conflict, the Italian is represented as one of the 'sans-culottes'.

18. As is discussed below, the representation of the Italian can be read as a parody of the idealizing and mythifying tone of the opening passage of *Homage to Catalonia*, where Orwell describes meeting the Italian Militiaman (1989, 1; see also 1994, 230-33).

Essentially, although the masses have some intimation that the official explanation for the murder of Santiago is a red herring, they are the dupes of their leaders (see p. 113). While the student is searching for the American, the crowds on the street are represented as puppets or automatons in the grip of an eternal repetition (p. 185).

Ultimately, the militiamen, like the Italian, are the instruments of an atavistic force of violence catalysed by the social chaos of the revolution, ciphers reduced to a few details of dress and physical appearance. Equally, in the later *Les Géorgiques*, p. 325, they are described as believing in the ‘exorcistic’ and ‘purifying’ power of violence, portrayed as mere extensions of their weapons which they treat as talismans (‘s’en servant avec cette espèce de fanatique superstition des primitifs’, *Les Géorgiques*, p. 325). In *Le Palace*, they are constantly associated with war and death by violent means (see pp. 59 & 121) and in particular, they are frequently compared to corpses (see p. 91). The section on the representation of revolution below will explore further the use and effect of such ‘archetypal’ characterisation in the novel.

Narrative Time

There are few concrete time references in *Le Palace*. No dates are given for events and sequential chronology is displaced by the frequent use of the present participle, by the repetition of images, phrases and narrative sequences, and by unmarked temporal shifts. One effect of this frequent repetition, a key element of the text’s underlying structure, is a sense that past and present have merged. This fits the thematics of the text, where the retrospective reflections of an older character frame and ironize the experiences of his younger, more idealistic self.

¹⁹ *Le Palace* thus uses a similar narrative technique to *Le Sacre* (since the stepfather only becomes the main focalizer in section two). However, in *Le Sacre*, the divisions between past and present are clearly signalled and contained by the division of the text into different time periods, as befits its more conventionally realist style (see for instance Carroll 1982, 38).

19. For the repetition of phrases and images, see pp. 175-76. There are numerous images of circularity in the text, such as the pigeons circling (p. 228) or the tramlines. The latter could

The second important point about the treatment of time in the text concerns the use of focalization. The main narrative voice is that of an alienated observer, whose vision is composed of isolated, frozen, snapshot moments. This can be seen in the description of the Italian's story, which the student describes as a series of unconnected, frozen visual images:

comme les diverses flèches [en néon] lumineuses qui composaient la réclame s'allumant et s'éteignant à tour de rôle), chacune trop différente de la précédente pour qu'il fût possible d'établir entre elles un élément de continuité (comme par exemple, sur une pellicule de film où la position d'un bras ne varie, d'une image à l'autre, qu'imperceptiblement). (p. 66)

On the one hand, the student's emphasis on the disjointedness of the story can be ascribed to the phenomenologically-realist aesthetic of the novel, in which events are represented as perceptually-overloaded and chaotic. Equally, his description can be ascribed to a formal mimeticism, mirroring the disjointed way in which the Italian perceives the event, and/or the style in which he narrates it. In this case, the reader is placed in the position of the student who must construct a coherent story out of the narrated fragments; conducting a process of *assemblage* (p. 53). On the other hand, the pictorial references to a series of stills or to the neon arrows may also function on a meta-fictional level as a concrete image of Simon's phenomenological aesthetic, which aims to reproduce in textual form the workings of individual perception. This representation of an apparent whole as being, in fact, constituted by the continuous juxtaposition and/or superposition of separate fragments, would stand as a metaphor for the formal principles underlying the construction of the text.²⁰

Moreover, as the passage quoted shows, this image stresses the disconnectedness and radical separateness of the various perceptual/textual fragments. The student (and, by extension, the reader) is perhaps free to connect the frozen images and/or memories according to a range of different associative

equally be a linear image, expressing a journey from one point to another, but are here an image of circularity, leading back to the point of departure (see p. 221).

20. See Andrews 1989, who ascribes the novel's fragmented form to a formal homology of frenzied revolutionary activity and an anarchist 'aesthetics of immediacy and urgency' (150). In *La corde raide*, the anarchists are similarly associated with speed and frenzied movement (for instance p. 35-36).

patterns - thematic, graphic, phonic, metaphorical or metonymic. This could be the kind of *bricolage* principle applied to reading Simon as well as to his writing, as discussed by Britton (1993, 15-16; see also Andrews 1989, 152-57). However, there is also a more radical sense that, to arrange these fragments into a coherent, causal narrative sequence at all is to violate them. What conception of narrative linkage and of cause and effect, is being suggested here? This point will be explored later in the section on historical change.

The main focus of the narrative, in line with the phenomenological realist strand of Simon's aesthetic, is the perceptual flux experienced by an individual subject (the student/his older self). Indeed, thematically, the representation of time suggests that the narrating subject's recollections or reconstructions of his past experiences and perceptions inevitably mediate, and thus alter, his present experiences and perceptions. The sequence on pp. 119-28, which shifts back and forth between revolutionary Barcelona and fifties Barcelona, exemplifies the complex representation of time in the novel. On the one hand, the reader's attention is drawn to the separation of past and present by the use of time references; on the other hand, this distinction is undermined, and linear chronology is problematised.²¹

This representation of the narrative subject's experience of time as circularity and repetition stems in part from Simon's attempt to express the subjective (and unconscious?) dimension of the narrator's processes of perception and memory, the internal flux in which temporal distinctions between past and present are blurred or become insignificant. However, the use of time references means this subjective experience of time is still distinguished from external, social time - expressed in terms of linear chronology - although this differentiation also (paradoxically) reinforces the distinctiveness of time as subjectively-experienced.

The merging of the perspectives of the past (the student) and the present (his older self) is both symptomatic and determining of the text's ambiguous narrative focalization. On the one hand, it is often difficult to distinguish

21. For example, 'à présent il y avait aussi des bonnes' (p. 122) and 'mais peut-être était-ce des années plus tard' (p. 120). See also pp. 129-30.

whether the focalizer is the frame narrator or his younger self, the student.²² On the other hand, a distinction between two different narrative focalizers must be maintained if textual irony is to function, that is, the vision of the older, wiser narrator must be differentiated from that of his younger, naive self. On p.122, for example, the two focalizers are explicitly differentiated. In the opening section of the novel (see pp. 21-22), the external focalization becomes an objectifying gaze which reproduces the narrator's now unpalatable past self in the form of a 'double microscopique', a fetishised and degraded representation that can be distanced and controlled.²³

Pugh relates the theme of doubles and doubling in the novel to the parody of the detective novel in Simon's work. He relates the splitting of the narrator to the fact that the figures of the detective and the criminal can symbolize a 'split self' (Pugh, 1985). While this is a generalization about what is a varied genre, it is true that in *Le Palace* this process of splitting has a repressive function, since it is intended to isolate a past self about which the narrator feels, at best, ambivalent. However, the novel shows that the mature narrator cannot discard his past so easily. Firstly, because the reader knows such a division is only a convenient fictional trick and, secondly, on an intra-narrative level, because the narrator cannot control the associations of involuntary memory, and by implication, the chain of representations.²⁴ Eventually he is engulfed by his past: it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the perspectives of the student and his older self as the novel reaches its climax. In another image

22. Again, if we compare *Le Palace* with *Le Sacre*, in the latter there is no ambiguity as regards focalizers. For example, the reader identifies the student focalizer of the second section with the stepfather because this is made clear by the switch from third person to first person narration (see p. 158). Occasionally there are passages and images in *Le Sacre* which suggest a similar anxiety about the passing of time and the processes of memory. One example is the use of Sartrean images to represent the past as a kind of gelatinous material (p. 186). Another, contrasting, representation is that of memory as a series of rapidly moving images - the past as a speeded-up film (p. 226). What is significant here, apart from the fact that both kinds of image are strongly visual, is that in *Le Sacre* the process of remembering is primarily alienating.

23. Carroll relates this to the representation of subjectivity in the novel, that is, where the subject's relation to himself is constructed as 'theatrical' or 'cinematographic', without any firm basis in either past or present (1982, 114).

24. This could be a meta-fictional comment. On several occasions (e.g. p. 156 & p. 221), the novel draws attention to the convenient fictionality involved in having two separate focalizers (and by implication, to the fictionality of the mimetic convention of having individual characters).

of circularity, the narrator's descent into the underground toilets becomes an ascent to meet the dead on the fourth floor of *The Palace*, and the narrative comes full circle back to the room of the opening pages (see pp. 223-24).²⁵

As discussed below, the treatment of narrative time ultimately expresses a vision of the external, social world observed, remembered and/or imagined by the narrating subject. Firstly, the narrator's past is, as it were, eternally present: his memories are in a constant state of revision, yet never easily recuperable. Secondly, and paradoxically, the omnipotence of memories means the present seems always already past or played out (see Leenhardt 1986, 124). The reader has a nightmarish sense of time - here personal, but by extension, social - being stuck, and of events and human figures endlessly repeating themselves (as is epitomized by the repetition of the word 'même' on p. 120), to the extent that nothing appears external to the narrator's subjective vision.

David Carroll also discusses how Simon's model of experience is a 'spatial' one, with experience conceived of as a perpetual present or simultaneity of perceptions. However, interestingly Carroll takes issue with Simon's frequent assertion that his novels aim to put an end to the diachrony of linear narrative. In particular, he criticises Simon's comparison of the formal space of his novels (up to *Histoire*) to the frame of a painting within which 'all its elements co-exist simultaneously' (Simon, quoted in Carroll 1982, 145), thus reconstructing in writing this experiential synchrony. As Carroll says:

Space in fact is never closed or 'framed' within the novel, nor is it an adequate frame for the novel. Painting does not enclose and account for the novel, for it is situated within the novel and thus implicated in its conflicts. The relationship between language and painting (time and space) is not simple, causal or *preformative* but one in which one term continually undermines [...] the other [...] The moment of writing (le présent de l'écriture) is [...] not a present at all but a process of reinscription of the traces of the past within a space [...] The present moment of experience is 'chaotic' because it is not simply spatial, not simply present, but already within itself historical, carrying along with it traces of the past – the present moment of writing also. (1982, 147)

25. This circularity is also suggested by the image of the pigeons. Firstly, because they literally bring us back to the novel's opening image/mirage of the pigeon. Secondly, because their flight, described as 'décrivant un vaste cercle au-dessus de la place' (p. 228), is one more metaphor for the text's formal construction.

The Representation of Revolution

Previous sections have shown that *Le Palace* does not read as a conventionally realist text - whether because it lacks referential notations of a concrete time and place, uses generic or archetypal characters, focuses on the micro-level of present individual subjective perception, or uses ambiguous focalization. Yet surely even this kind of de-familiarization or de-contextualization has semantic and ideological effects? Moreover, the text also uses recurrent patterns of imagery and of structures: indeed, its very lack of contextualization is an example of this. This section argues that the text remains obstinately referential - and, moreover, consistent - in its ideological take on events in Barcelona.

As critics such as Sykes and Britton have shown, *Le Palace* is explicitly written as a corrective to another Civil War text, Malraux's *L'Espoir*. This is true even if the latter functions less as a source of specific intertextual allusions than as an implicit and negative narrative model.²⁶

L'Espoir ? Pour moi c'est un peu Tintin faisant la révolution. C'est une sorte de roman d'aventures écrit par quelqu'un qui est lui-même un aventurier dans le cadre de la révolution. En plus [...] c'est le romancier-Dieu, il est partout [...] D'ailleurs, Malraux parle de la guerre d'Espagne. C'est un guerrier que décrit des actes de guerre. Mon livre est sur la révolution. (Simon in Chapsal 1961, 32-33)

As Simon says, the subject of his text is not the Civil War but the Revolution, and his representations focus on the revolutionary period in Barcelona, from the outbreak of the War to the street fighting in May 1937. It is important to highlight, as Paul Preston does, that Barcelona is unrepresentative of the rest of Republican Spain. The historical context of Simon's Spanish experience is the experience of a 'social cataclysm' (1996, 123 and 128); of the chaos spawned by the ongoing conflict between popular revolutionary

26. There is none of the explicit dialogue with an inter-text that occurs in *Les Géorgiques*, even if that inter-text, *Homage to Catalonia*, is not named. It may be because the mutually-determining discourse of both the object of critique and the critique itself are explicitly inscribed in particular texts referring to a particular historical moment that it is necessary for *Les Géorgiques* to flesh out its historical and cultural reference points more fully, as argued in Chapter Three.

organisms and state institutions, combined with the inter-factional power struggles which culminated in the street fighting of May 1937 (Graham, 1999). In fact, the most important element in Simon's implicit critique of revolution in *Le Palace* is the identification of the city that spawned the most revolutionary elements of Popular Front resistance to Franco with negative images of death and disease.

In *Le Palace*, as in the other two novels, what is emphasised about the revolutionary situation in Barcelona is its confused and chaotic nature (revolution as 'la pagaille', *Le Sacre*, p. 49). The main focalizer (here the Student) is unable to integrate his experience of this chaotic situation into a meaningful narrative. However, the causes to which this social chaos is ascribed in the novels are worth exploring. Moreover, Simon is not interested in the Spanish experience *per se*: in all three novels, the allusions to other revolutionary situations (namely 1789 and the Bolshevik Revolution), have the effect not of illuminating the specificity of the events of 1936-7, but of universalising the Spanish conflict. These points are explored more fully in Chapter Three in relation to *Les Géorgiques*.

One way in which Simon criticizes the Revolution is through his representation of the characters and their relationships. The function of the American's ironic comments throughout the first four sections of the novel is to reveal the distance between official accounts of Republican unity and the reality of the behind-the-scenes power struggle. Just before he disappears, the American is involved in a clash with authority, as represented by '[l]e chauve', a Schoolmaster clone (pp. 149-58). During this exchange, the American links the political bloodletting to a myth propagated by those in authority (that all weapons are at the front) commenting on the huge numbers of weapons on display in the city. In addition, he pokes fun at sacred revolutionary concepts such as the power of the 'masses' (p. 153). The verbal confrontation which follows between the sceptical American and the dogmatic schoolmaster type emphasizes both their opposed attitudes to politics, and the climate of extremism and generalized paranoia reigning in revolutionary Barcelona.

Apart from refusing to swallow the official (government or Party) line, the American also questions whether the current situation represents any kind

of progress over Spain's pre-Republican past (pp. 154-55). However, his indirect culturalist critique linking, for instance, contemporary events to Spain's history of religious fanaticism, goes beyond a clear-sighted denunciation of the abuses and failures of the Republic, and a rejection of political manicheism, when he implies that violence is an immutable part of the Spanish national psyche. Ironically, the notion that Spaniards are 'naturally' violent and anarchic (hence needing a strong leader or an 'iron surgeon' to preempt social and political chaos) was characteristic of catastrophist right-wing discourse before the Civil War. It also became a central tenet of Francoist ideology (see for instance Graham 1996, 7; Preston 1996, 67-68; Labanyi 1989, 35-39).

The Schoolmaster type(s) are represented as believing in a notion of historical progress associated with the (unnamed) 'prophètes barbus, graves, myopes et méditatifs' (p. 151), whereas the American mocks any mechanistically teleological theory of history in a veiled reference to Marx (p. 141). The context to his remarks is the Schoolmaster's assertion that 'Nosotros' - whichever faction the Schoolmaster belongs to - has history on its side. The problem with this, as the American implies, is that any action, including the violent suppression of one's opponents, can be justified in terms of historical 'progress'.

Is the Schoolmaster intended to be representative of a *particular* political faction - and, if so, which one?²⁷ Or is Simon criticising a more universal tendency? It is tempting to see the Schoolmaster as broadly representing the centralising, anti-social revolution PSUC line, since Simon was (briefly) a CP member, and *The Palace* is obviously a fictionalized representation of the Hotel Colón, the Headquarters of the PSUC (see Pugh 1985). However, the ideology and party affiliations of the Schoolmaster, and indeed of all the characters are not made explicit. The text is not interested in portraying the specificities of the (extremely complex) political situation in September 1936 but in stressing the universal features of the conflict and of the ideological differences in which it is rooted, that is, in representing them as inherent in *any* revolutionary situation.

27. Andrews (1989) thinks the novel is criticizing the 'sense of urgency that attends the anarchists' project of *comunismo libertario*' (151) yet he also says that, formally, the novel adopts the same 'apocalyptic delirium of self-representation' (153).

Deguy (1962) argues that the American's attack on the ironies, absurdities and hypocrisies of the political situation takes place primarily on the level of discourse. According to him, there are two antagonistic discourses in the novel. Firstly, the discourse of the intellectual (identified with the American and the student), characterised by a 'recul' in relation to events and other people, and by cynical eloquence or 'logorrhea' (1962, 1022).²⁸ Secondly, the discourse of the silent man of the people, which effectively refuses to signify, embodied in the schoolmaster's almost monosyllabic reprimands to the American. The American's critique involves a particular, subversive use of language which aims at 'jamming' rationalist political discourse and causal linkage in order to break through the congealed mass of deadened language (1962, 1023). This could suggest that any discourse of radical social change inevitably degenerates into empty sloganeering and, moreover, cannot express the real complexities and contradictions of a concrete, revolutionary situation. Or that it becomes a form of meaningless rhetoric used to mask political conflict and opportunism. Again, this seems to fit with Simon's negative portrayal of the revolutionary experience and concomitant attack on political engagement, analysed more fully in Chapter Three.

One recurring image used to represent the revolutionary elements is that of the omnipresent posters and flags. They symbolize primarily the different political agendas of the various revolutionary Left groups, even though these ideological divisions are not elaborated upon. For instance, the words written on the banner accompanying the coffin - and thus the particular political tendency - are alluded to only as a generalized cry of revolt, fragile and inconsistent as the flimsy material upon which it is written (p. 106). This cry is personified as both an unavenged corpse and a betrayed ghost - as Santiago/Durruti and, by extension, the revolutionary (or rather anarchist) ideals and aims he embodied.

28. While largely agreeing with Deguy's characterisation of the first kind of discourse, it can be argued that, if in the novel the student's position is not, even if only minimally, distinguished from that of the American, the mentor-figure, the novel's (retrospective) critique of youthful naivety is weakened.

However, it is not clear who or what is the author of this betrayal. Moreover, the revolutionary discourse espoused by Santiago/Durruti is represented by the image of a series of comic-strip bubbles (recalling Simon's comparison of the heroic discourse of *L'Espoir* to the adventures of Tintin). This suggests that it is the revolutionary project itself which is at fault, the stuff of a naive, schoolboy politics, its unrealistic utopianism exemplified by, and crystallised in, the romanticising and simplistic discourse it employs (see also *Les Géorgiques*, p. 330). The (anarchist) banner is then contrasted to a different set of flags (p. 107), represented as a crude signifying system expressing primitive emotions. Again, this implies one problem with the revolution is that political discourse has deteriorated to the level of sloganeering or, at worst, mere propaganda and slander.

Such black and white (mis)representations of the situation can have literally murderous consequences. The American refers ironically to the political dangers of this kind of practice when he refers to the still-born revolution as:

une puante momie enveloppée et étranglée par le cordon ombilical de kilomètres de phrases enthousiastes tapées sur ruban à machine par l'enthousiaste armée de correspondants étrangers de la presse libérale. Victime de la maladie pré-infantile de la révolution: le parrainage et l'estime de l'honorable Manchester Guar..... (p. 17)

Here, the premature death of the revolution (or the Republic?) is blamed on foreign pro-Republican press coverage. This could express merely a healthy scepticism towards the distortions present in any type of media representation where there are conflicting ideological visions in play. Or it might involve a criticism directed at the collusive role played by foreign supporters of the Republic. The latter, in parroting the official government line of unity, are reinforcing a sanitised version of events which censors any reference to the darker undercurrents, for instance the internal power struggle between Communists, Anarchists and POUM.

On the other hand, the reference to the press might be part of a wider critique of the abstract or ‘armchair’ espousal of revolutionary theories which, in *Les Géorgiques*, is identified with Orwell and the intellectual class which constituted the readership of liberal-Left newspapers such as *The Manchester Guardian* (see *Les Géorgiques*, pp. 315-20).

Similarly, it is implied that, paradoxically, by being elevated to the status of holy scripture with Marx, Lenin, and Stalin as its prophets, Marxism undergoes a pernicious process of vulgarisation in which its theoretical arguments are fragmented and reduced to slogans. Simon’s treatment of this process is frequently satirical: for instance, he pokes fun at the all-pervasive, fetishised images of the revolutionary icons. In *Le Palace*, the portraits of Marx and Stalin hung on the walls of the hotel are accorded the same decorative status as the eighteenth-century engravings they have replaced. However, they fail to erase these earlier traces of erotic art, which historicize and subvert their ‘sacred’ status (p. 16; see also the description of the poster of the dead hero on pp. 125-26).

In addition, with supreme irony, the two ‘prophètes barbus’ of the revolution have ended up as hot market commodities: both texts refer to the brisk trade in revolutionary paraphernalia. The divine status which Marx and Lenin have acquired is further debunked by attributing the omnipresence of these symbols to an expression of universal human psychology. In *Les Géorgiques*, they are equated with the souvenirs and talismans carried by superstitious crowds during ‘les manifestations sportives ou les pèlerinages’ (p. 329). However, the sales of such memorabilia also reflect the behind-the-scenes power struggle in revolutionary Barcelona, for instance in *Les Géorgiques*, where their presence or absence indicates which faction has the upper hand, as when images of Stalin proliferate (p. 278). To return to the specific instance of the banners and flags used in the funeral procession, what they ultimately symbolize is the uneasy compromise between the Popular Front government and the more revolutionary groups which purportedly support it (the American remarks that there are ‘trop de drapeaux’).

They are contrasted on pp. 107-08 with other flags representing the Republic, an idea or system of political co-habitation described as the end-result of centuries of conflict and compromise between different class interests. Here, the colours of the Republican flag are red, white and blue, those of the French *tricolore*. This and the allusions to ‘philosophes’, ‘Communes’ and ‘reines décapitées’, suggest the historical referent is not the Spanish Second Republic but the French Republican system, born out of the 1789 Revolution. The evaluation of the Enlightenment inheritance seems positive here, although elsewhere in Simon’s novelistic discourse it is represented in a very different light. The tricolour which represents the Republican compromise is contrasted to the single, uncompromising colour(s) - red or red and black - of the various revolutionary groups. Like the strident newspaper headlines, the latter signify an endless and ultimately futile power struggle.²⁹ On pp. 108-109 this is described as the legacy of:

[un] blason tracé par un roi barbare et facétieux trempant au soir d’une bataille quatre doigts désinvoltes dans la blessure d’un baron expirant un baron qui n’avait jamais imaginé pour ses armes d’autre métal que l’or, pour devise un autre mot qu’orgueil, pour loi d’autre règle que la force et qui, comme son roi, ne possédait en fait de terres que de jaunes étendues calcinées, poussiéreuses, incandescentes et stériles. (p. 108-109)

The allusion to the myth of the origin of the Catalan flag emphasizes the physicality and materiality of the political category of Catalonia, as befits Simon’s phenomenological aesthetic. However, in addition, the Civil War and the internal conflict among the Republicans is linked to a timeless tradition of a weak central state and corrupt and feudalistic political arrangements which essentializes conflict and the abuse of political power as intrinsically ‘Spanish’.³⁰

29. In *Les Géorgiques*, the struggle for supremacy on the Left is represented by similar symbols. O. and his POUMist companions are hunted down to serve as an example to ‘tous ceux qui, quelle que soit leur origine ou leur capacité à faire des discours, s’aviseraient de venir mettre en question la qualité ou la nuance du rouge dont était teint le seul drapeau authentiquement rouge’ (p. 354-55).

30. This is not to deny the reality of the political system of *caciquismo* in Spanish history. Jo Labanyi and Helen Graham define *caciquismo* as follows: ‘a *cacique* was the local political boss who “delivered” the votes in the rigged elections which sustained the regular alternation in power [*turno pacífico*] of the two dynastic parties of the Restoration monarchy. [...] The

A negative view of the revolution is also generated by the archetypal characterisation of the Barcelona militiamen. In one sense, Simon's depiction can be seen in terms of a corrective to what he regards as the self-serving romanticism of both Malraux and Orwell. The description of the Italian in particular must be informed by Simon's reading of *Homage to Catalonia*: this is made clear in *Les Géorgiques*, where O. is lambasted for his description of the militiaman as a kind of 'noble savage' (p. 332). The narrator asserts that, while the militiaman is probably a realist notation because '[les miliciens] étaient à peu près tous taillés sur le même modèle' (p. 333), the description is intended to serve allegorical, and ultimately propagandistic, purposes.

According to Deguy, the militiamen in *Le Palace* are 'images de sempiternel' which represent 'l'homme à tout instant dans toutes ses postures saisi comme espèce, frappé de spécificité anonyme' (1962, 1027). This 'typification' is very different from the best known use of typification, Lukács's 'particularistic' notion. In the latter case, the purpose of the type is to select 'the characteristic or "essential" features of the social process' and to render them in 'a single expressive moment of a peculiarly intense and concentrated kind' (Prendergast 1986, 32; also pp. 25-26 and 32-34).³¹ The militiaman 'type' in Simon does not point towards wider social and historical processes, but rather serves to negate the notion of the latter as being dynamic or dialectical in any sense.

It is true that Orwell projects onto the Italian his own idealistic vision of revolutionary solidarity (the Italian 'typifies [...] the special atmosphere of that time', 1989, 2). He admits he is only able to do so because the Italian remains a complete stranger. As Simon suggests in *Les Géorgiques*, the militiaman could be just as easily a negative symbol: 'une vision prémonitoire des désastres futurs' (p. 333). However, Simon's accusation that Orwell is guilty of (ideologically-motivated) self-censorship and bad faith by ignoring the willingness of the Italian to use violence - a quality Orwell himself notes - is

term *caciquismo* denotes the institutionalization of this network of bosses as the basis of the *turno* system. It is usually employed critically, to sum up the impediments to Spain's political and economic development' (1995, 419).

31. Many of Orwell's protagonists such as Dorothy in *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935); Comstock in *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (1936); and Bowling in *Coming Up For Air* (1939) are certainly 'types' in this sense.

unfounded, as is argued in Chapter Three. Equally, while the notion of compensation partly explains Simon's negative characterisation of the Italian and all the militiamen, it appears to be an *over*-compensation.

At the end of *Le Palace*, the militiamen are compared to poorly-equipped gladiators and an overworked opera chorus: 'tournant et retournant autour des pâtés des maisons, comme dans ces opéras où les figurants à peine sortis de scène se dépêchent de galoper derrière le décor pour rentrer par le côté opposé' (p. 224). These comparisons highlight the pathos of their situation: the reference to gladiators implies that it is their role to fight and die for the pleasure of others, emphasizing that whether *they* believe they are fighting for an ideal or not, they are being duped. However, the opera allusion is also comic, further emphasizing that the revolution is an absurd spectacle by highlighting the pointlessness of the militiamen's frenzied activity (another image of a circular movement without progress). Thus a relation of distance is established between the narrator and the duped militiamen that echoes the discourse of authority established in *Les Géorgiques* in relation to O.'s narrative, as outlined in Chapter Three.

The encounter between the student and the guard at the entrance of *Le Palace* encapsulates the student's attitude to the militiamen, and the pitying, yet ironically-distanced, tone used to describe the inhabitants of revolutionary Barcelona:

l'interchangeable carcasse efflanquée, vêtue ou plutôt flottant dans l'interchangeable salopette brune, l'interchangeable foulard noué autour du cou [...] , l'interchangeable tête de Murcien (ou d'Arabe, ou de Sicilien, ou d'Indien, ou de Maltais, - ou de mélange de tout cela - c'est-à-dire de tout ce qui avait été un jour ou l'autre chassé de chez soi par famine ou par violence et transbahuté de gré ou de force d'un bord à l'autre de la Méditerranée pour commencer, de l'Atlantique ensuite, jusqu'à ce que naisse finalement (non pas des croisements de race, mais de cette espèce de constante, de commun dénominateur: la faim, à la fois moteur, cause et effet) comme une espèce de race unique, de type humain supplémentaire et hybride, à mi-chemin entre le chien maigre et le rapace, à l'interchangeable visage desséché, l'interchangeable nez d'aigle, l'interchangeable regard à la fois ardent, doux, cruel, souffreteux et sauvage. (p. 189)

Despite the references to poverty and to the social causes of migration, the militiamen appear to him, at best, distorted, traumatised or primitive offshoots of an essential human nature (see also p. 225). A similar tone is used to describe the *brigadistas* - with the exception of the American (see pp. 33-34). However, the militiamen are also represented as an alien breed altogether: as in the above passage, they are 'hybrid', 'supplementary' abstractions. The extreme negativity of this representation of the city's inhabitants reaches its apotheosis in the description of the *pension* owner in the final section, alternately described as a mechanical monkey, a waxwork, a corpse, and an animal (see pp. 216-22).

In fact, the Barcelona militiamen and the crowds are a sub-division of a larger category of the primitive in Simon's texts, as stated in Chapter Three.³² Treating the Spanish masses in this way can be seen as part of a de-mystifying depiction of revolutionary Barcelona. It cuts through what are referred to at one point in *Les Géorgiques* as 'des explications compliquées et pour ainsi dire techniques' (p. 352), and focuses on the experiential and human aspects - or costs - of the revolution. However, it can also be argued that it is a form of exoticism in which, as Barthes says: 'the Other becomes a pure object, a spectacle, a clown' (1973, 152). Representing political violence as one manifestation of atavistic yet unchanging human impulses, and eliding 'technical' (that is, historical and cultural) details obscures any understanding of the complex determinations, or structural mediations, of the Spanish revolution.

One possible consequence of this kind of de-historicizing discourse can be seen in *Les Géorgiques* (p. 325), where Simon suggests that the violence in Barcelona is the mirror-image of the bloodletting in the Nationalist zone. While it is true that instances of anarchy and mob violence occurred on the Republican side, this kind of comment is obfuscatory. The internal Republican purges from May 1937 onwards are distinct, firstly, from the revolutionary excesses and particular instances of the breakdown of law and order that occurred in the Republican zone, and, secondly, from the systematic persecution of Nationalist sympathisers by the SIM. Thirdly, these (variously motivated) instances of

political violence on the Republican side should not be equated with Franco's policy of annihilating his political opponents by totalitarian means. Even in statistical terms, the latter kind of equation is highly dubious, as Paul Preston points out in his study of the war (1986, 82).³³

The militiamen and the revolutionary masses are also 'supplements' in the sense of being represented both as ghosts, and as simulacra of an (abstract or primitive) 'humanité originelle'. Again, their representation as either the living dead or as mere copies emphasizes their essential unreality. This is one way of interpreting the student's 'burlesque' sensation of being trapped in 'un de ces palais de miroirs dans une combinaison de plusieurs glaces qui lui renvoyaient l'image du même cadavre décharné, donquichottesque et triste, travesti en mécano' (p. 193). The allusion to the absurd and tragi-comic figure of Don Quijote suggests the militiamen are living in an unreal (and dangerous) fantasy world. It also reminds us they are the products of a particular discourse on revolutionary Barcelona, constructed in opposition to Orwell's (supposedly) romanticised representation of the Spanish working classes. Simon's discourse is designed to cut through the shibboleths of a certain kind of Leftist discourse (such as the innate nobility and historical destiny of the 'pueblo') by depicting the latter as alienated, prey to unconscious or elemental urges, and manipulated by unscrupulous leaders.

However, the depiction of the city's inhabitants as a primitive mass also undermines any sense of their being conscious political agents. The novel suggests that, once underway, the revolution unleashes forces (personified in these archetypal 'sans-culottes') which are inherently barbaric and chaotic. This kind of representation implicitly carries within it the notion that a revolutionary challenge to the existing institutions of social order will inevitably spark a cycle of violence and chaos which will doom it to destruction and failure.

32. The gypsy hordes in *Les Géorgiques* are also described as 'le rappel, le Mane-Thecel-Pharès, la conservation irrécusable et catégorique sous forme humaine de la violence à l'état pur' (p. 214-15). This point is discussed further in Chapter Three.

33. For instance, Republican troops did not carry out a deliberate 'scorched earth' policy, including the killing of prisoners and the use of rape as a weapon as war, as Franco's Army of Africa did. As Preston says 'those [atrocities] committed by the Nationalists were officially condoned by those who claimed to be fighting in the name of Christian civilization' (1995, 145-46). See also Preston 1993, parts VI to XII, particularly 145-46 and 225-28.

The description of its inhabitants is one element in a novelistic discourse which represents Barcelona as both the city of death and the city of revolution, thus inextricably knitting together death and revolution. Barcelona stands metonymically for the revolution, and Barcelona is overwhelmingly associated with negative imagery of death and loss, most obviously in the numerous allusions to corpses. One the novel's central images is that of the hidden and decaying corpse. This can be read referentially as a reminder of the increasing number of bodies turning up in the city and as symbolizing the betrayal or assassination of the ideals of the short-lived revolution. Two corpses are the main candidates for the origin of this metaphorical stench. Firstly, the Francoist General (see pp. 170 and p. 31), suggesting that the current climate of violence and paranoia is a legacy of the Civil War, rather than a consequence of the internecine conflict between the various political groupings supporting the Republic.³⁴ It could even be a (loose) allusion to the cycle of political assassinations which began with the shooting of Lieutenant del Castillo in July 1936 and the subsequent revenge shooting of Calvo Sotelo, which was the immediate catalyst of the military rising (see Preston 1995, 136-38).

The second corpse is that of the dead baby referred to by the American: 'un petit macrocéphale décédé avant terme parce que les docteurs n'étaient pas du même avis et jeté aux égouts dans un linceul de mots' (p. 16). The deformed, still-born foetus could either be a symbol of the failed or aborted revolution, or of the doomed Second Republic. Whatever the case, the implication is that this creature was unable to survive due to the weight of its monstrous 'head' (its intellectual origins or its ideological conflicts?). The use of metaphors of pregnancy and birth with reference to the revolution - or, rather, its demise - also has numerous possible resonances and intertexts. The final image of the Queen's abortive labour at the end of the novel is the final act in a bloody revolutionary drama. Yet the tone of the closing images is both dramatic and parodic, a birth that is in fact two deaths. Firstly, the death of the monstrous, degenerate foetus (the doomed revolution?) and, secondly, that of the Queen for whom this act of 'creation' means her own destruction. The Queen herself is an

34. This could be a reference to General Manuel Goded, the leader of the nationalist rising in Barcelona (see Preston 1995, 148 & 151-2).

over-determined figure who could represent either the ‘confuse et agonisante’ (p. 229) revolution, the city and/or the Republic, and/or the Spanish nation.

According to Orr, the image of a monstrous labour is an implicit reference to Rabelais, an important literary model for Simon because of his subversive use of linguistic and technical vulgarization. Simon quotes Rabelais’s use of bodily functions as a metaphor for textual production: Orr’s example is Gargamelle’s pregnancy as a cosmic metaphor for the act of creation. However, Simon denies or inverts the positive accent on the creative possibilities engendered by writing by ‘substituting Rabelais’s birth of a progeny of fictional possibility (Gargantua) with a still-born child’ (1993, 16).³⁵

Here, however, the American’s reference to the ‘enfant mort-né’ seems not so much a critical comment on the negative consequences of act of writing *per se*, as of a specific kind of discourse. This is in the first instance the idealising discourse of the foreign correspondents who support the official Republican line and, by extension, the generalized ‘discours héroïque’ alluded to by Leenhardt (see also Orwell 1989, 90, 191 and 211-13). Again, the probable direct and ironic intertextual allusion here is *L’Espoir*. Malraux uses the image of (successful) pregnancy to refer to the ‘dreamlike situation in which the Left found itself’ in the early days of the war: ‘Barcelone était enceinte de tous les rêves de vie’ (Malraux, p. 32; quoted in Sykes 1983, 125). In *Le Palace*, however, this heady promise is brought to a bloody end, as is underscored by the novel’s final description of the haemorrhaging queen (pp. 229-30).³⁶

35. Similarly, Carroll relates the use of the image of the abortion or stillbirth to the critique of representation in the novel, where representation would be ‘at the same time “the giving birth” to and “abortion” of reality’. Carroll argues that representation can never accurately represent the totality of an event (1982, 116). Equally he relates the images of death in the novel, particularly the fruitless search for the ‘cause’ of Santiago’s death, to the narrator’s search for the ‘truth’ of his past experience, and on a meta-fictional level, to the search for a ‘true’ representation of such historical events. Both are doomed to failure because ‘the “return to the past” [...] fails to produce an “adequate”, totalized, complete representation, fails to overcome the deaths, absences and contradictions constituting it, to unify the fragments and traces of events and experience’ (1982, 117). This also means, according to Carroll that representation is potentially limitless and ‘could be defined as the potentially infinite repetition or rewriting of the real’ (1982, 116) and that, in turn, history is construed as ‘plural, conflictual and open-ended’ (1982, 118). However, Chapter Three takes issue with this reading of Simon’s representation of ‘the sense of history’ (ibid).

36. Brewer sees the Queen’s haemorrhaging body as a metaphor for the revolution (1995, 90).

However, whereas the American's reference to the deformed foetus could imply that the natural course of events - a successful pregnancy/revolutionary transformation - has been unnaturally terminated, it seems clear in the final images of the novel that the revolution is perceived as an unviable option from the start. From its very conception, the revolution is represented as monstrous, deformed, and 'vaine', doomed to lead to bloodshed and chaos ('quelque petit monstre macrocéphale [...] inviable et dégénéré', p. 230). There is no real political and historical discussion in the novel of the causes of this failure. Does the revolution fail because of a (necessary) process of state centralisation, one element of which was curbing the power of the revolutionary elements? Or because of the hopelessly utopian nature of the revolutionary programme itself? However, such specific historical questions remain an implicit and stubborn sub-text to the novel's representation of the Revolution.

Two further points arise from this passage. Firstly, the death of the foetus, which also brings about the death of the Queen/city, connotes the costliness of the Republican/revolutionary experiment. However, the anti-heroic, ironising tone of the novel persists: this birth/death is monstrous, but also absurd in its grotesqueness. The Queen's death is denied any tragic or heroic associations (she is 'même pas éventrée'), her haemorrhaging is not dramatic or apocalyptic but 'rien qu'un peu de sang'. In addition, the labour takes place in an underground toilet, and the sombre, mythical figures ('la cérémonieuse rangée de cireurs [...] tout entiers vêtus [...] de noir, alignés, patients, disponibles, terribles et faméliques') are also bootblacks. Even the poignant image of the miniature coffins is muted by the reference to shoeshine boxes ('petites boîtes cloutées semblables à d'antiques et mystérieux petits coffres, de minuscules *et dérisoires* cercueils d'enfants', p. 230, my italics).

There is none of the euphoria or sense of the birth of a new order which is tangible in, for example, in the early chapters of *L'Espoir*, in Orwell's description of Barcelona in December 1936 - or even in Simon's own *Le Sacre* (p. 142; see also Roudiez 1985, 48). The atmosphere reigning in the town is indeed *unreal*, but not in the positive sense of being charged with a new, previously unimaginable sense of possibility or social solidarity. Rather than a 'rêve', revolutionary Barcelona is a nightmare, its stench one symptom of a

literal and metaphorical oppressiveness conveyed not just by the inhabitants' ghostly or cadaverous appearance, but also by frequent references to darkness and shadows and, in particular, to the stultifying heat (p. 143).

This impression is reinforced by the varied use of the metaphor of a theatrical performance. In the passage on p. 119, the American asserts that the inhabitants of the revolutionary city participating in the conflict are 'des fantômes', emphasizing that they are experiencing a deformed and parodic imitation of reality. The theatrical allusion functions less meta-fictionally - drawing the reader's attention to the constructed nature of what she is reading - than thematically, as a denunciation of the inauthenticity and unreality of the revolutionary situation. It is then extended to refer to the revolution as a whole. However, rather than as Shakespearean tragedy, the revolution is represented as the grotesque 'grand guignol' referred to in the 'récit de l'homme-fusil', or O.'s 'pantomime avec effusion de sang' in *Les Géorgiques*.³⁷

The closing image of the monstrous labour takes place beneath streetlights compared to 'les rampes d'un théâtre'. In *Les Géorgiques* too, the baroque excesses of the cityscape are woven into a vision of Barcelona as a giant stage (for instance p. 326). This implies that, because human life is so cheap and because the bloodletting seems ultimately motiveless, the actions witnessed by the characters (on the streets of Barcelona, but also, by implication at the front) lack any meaning or transcendence (see also *Les Géorgiques*, pp. 302-303).

The association of revolutionary Barcelona with death extends to the representation of the physical surroundings, particularly the buildings. The Palace Hotel is compared to a mausoleum or a crypt (p. 188). While its monstrousness and corruption are here identified with past decadence, and not with the revolutionary present, this past persists in the form of a poisonous legacy, another image connected to the symbolism of the corpse. The building

37. See *Les Géorgiques*, pp. 284-85, where O. is referring not just to events in revolutionary Barcelona, but to the War as a whole. In this passage, the image is connected with the idea that events such as the night attack are represented in the press according to the propagandistic needs of the moment or the abundance/lack of other stories (p. 285). Thus the media representation of the war adds a further layer of distortion and spin (although, again, this shows that the historical event - the referent - is only accessible to most people in mediated form).

is also compared to a gigantic wreck floating on the metaphorical tide of revolutionary chaos (p. 187 and p. 213). What is emphasized above all by these images is the monumental decorativeness of the hotel, juxtaposed jarringly with the ocean of decaying matter on which it floats. The use of the term 'gigantomachy', alluding to mythical, gargantuan battles, may also be intended to underline the ironic contrast between the past splendour of the hotel and its current state of decay. Symbolically, this might extend to the contrast between the utopian dreams – or monstrous imaginings, depending on one's viewpoint – which inspired the revolution, and the unsavoury material reality of life in revolutionary Barcelona. The reference to an abandoned carnival float on p. 213 reinforces the nostalgic tone of past celebration and present abandonment.

However, these images are not just restricted to wartime Barcelona: on his return in the fifties, the older narrator perceives the city to have the same unreal, ghostly quality (p. 4), with its inhabitants bearing the mark of an invisible lack, wound or defeat. In part this could be a realist notation, since disabled men or amputees were a common sight in Spain in the post-Civil War period. However, it also has a mythical dimension: both the waiter and the 'cireurs' at the entrance to the underground toilets are connected with the rites and guardianship of the dead, and are described in similar terms as being hollow figures or living corpses (p. 22 and p. 222). The effect is to imply that history has stood still: the same images, the same types recur fifteen years on.

We can read this as suggesting that the revolution and Civil War have been so cataclysmic as to have left the city's inhabitants permanently traumatised, with their spiritual or psychological alienation transposed metonymically onto the city itself. There could even be an implicit criticism of Francoism: the references to the town's ghostly inhabitants involve the lower social strata – waiters, prostitutes, bootblacks. The images of castration would connote the final crushing of popular revolutionary aspirations by the Nationalists, and the oppressiveness of the regime, both in terms of its social rigidity and its continuing political repression.³⁸ One form this took was

38. On the other hand, allusions to castration appear ironic to any reader with an awareness of the importance given in Nationalist discourse to the cult of masculinity and of the warrior which, in particular, is interwoven with the cult of heroic, sacrificial death (see Labanyi 1989, 35-53, especially 36-37).



precisely the refusal to lay the past to rest by actively cultivating the memory of the divisions of the Civil War (see Preston 1996, 1-3; Graham 1996). However, one could infer that, ironically, the regime's ideological crusade is hampered by its obsession with denying the cultural memory of the *republican* past and the real causes of the Civil War, with erasing any traces of it, which thus paradoxically continues to 'haunt' it.³⁹

Whether these descriptions are to be read as realist notations, as metaphors, or as external projections of the mental state of the narrator himself is ultimately undecidable. On the one hand, the representation of time as static, and of Barcelona as a ghost town could merely reflect the narrator's own subjective state. However, since the failure of the revolution is represented fatalistically, and the working classes are also portrayed in terms of unchanging archetypes, the recurring images of death seem rather to imply that the revolutionary city is a kind of hell in which no change or progress is possible. The narrator's return to Barcelona is precisely a reawakening of the dead, a search for the reality of the past, and his meanderings around the city (finally culminating in the descent/ascent into the subterranean 'urinoirs') reproduce spatially the novel's temporal movement. The attempted exorcism of the narrator's unwelcome memories would thus be another frame through which to interpret the ghost imagery. However, as the narrative progresses, memories of his revolutionary experience become less and less mediated by retrospective irony. This effect is reinforced by the merging of the narrator's present and former selves, to the point where they are no longer distinct. This suggests his memories of past experience are too powerful, and that this attempted exorcism ends in failure.

Thus, on both an intra - and a meta- narrative level, the (older narrator's) search for (the truth of) his past, is related to the search for the reasons for the failure of the revolution. Indeed, the two are linked the reference to the pool of blood from the Queen's abortive labour on the tiles of the 'urinoir' (p. 228). Furthermore, the rustling wings of the scattering pigeons are also compared to

39. Mention of the Civil War was banned until 1948, according to Labanyi (1995, 210). As Labanyi points out, the very act of censorship was counter-productive in that it led to a 'hyper-politicization of culture' (1995, 214).

‘d’ironiques et imbéciles applaudissements’ (p. 228), a further, ironic use of the theatrical metaphor to suggest the end of a performance.

However, as stated, this ‘ending’ does not bring about the solution to the enigma. Indeed, we are unsure whether there is any enigma to resolve in the first place, whether a death has even occurred. After the American’s comment on the absurdity of giving people guns without training them to use them, a shot rings out in the ‘urinoir’ (p. 227). Whether the shot is connected to an accident, a murder or a suicide remains unclear. Equally, we are uncertain whether it takes place in the past of revolutionary Barcelona and concerns the Italian and the student, or in the present and involves the older narrator. The shot is noticed only by the pigeons and not by the humans loitering in the square - among whom are included photographers whose main group of customers are militiamen (past) and the old man and his grandson (present).

It is clear that, on the hermeneutic level, the various quests, - including the student’s search for the American and his older self’s attempted exorcism of his ghosts - end in either implicit or explicit failure. As do, on a thematic level, the search for the cause(s) of the failure of the revolution, and the existential quest for the truth of past experience; questions which remain unanswered and/or unanswerable. Pugh connects this failure to the impossibility of any attempt by the subject to obtain a state of total self-knowledge, asking Simon if the fictional quest is an ‘allegory of the impossibility (at the psychological, epistemological, and teleological levels) of the impossibility of the autobiographical project’ (1985, 5-6).

While Simon denies any such philosophical underpinning to his novel (Pugh 1985, 6), in *Le Palace* the quest for the truth of the past is certainly infused with images of death (see also Carroll 1982, note 35). Furthermore, the section describing the funeral procession seems to place a question mark over the ontological status of the objects of both searches. Not only is there uncertainty over the subject of the question (who or what killed Santiago?) but also the very object of the murder is erased linguistically (‘¿Quién ha muerto [a Santiago]?’ , p. 113).⁴⁰ The student comments on the crowd’s restlessness:

40. The elided object transforms the verb from a transitive to an intransitive one, which perhaps gives the question even greater existential overtones: there is even uncertainty not

Comme s'ils cherchaient quelque chose dont ils auraient peur, qui serait caché dans la ville et dont ils ignoreraient la nature et même le nom (le cadavre en décomposition et puant du vieux général, avait dit l'Américain) *sauf que ça continuerait à être là même s'ils arrivaient à tuer tous les généraux et tous les bedeaux, et que c'est effroyablement dangereux et qu'ils ne le trouveront jamais.* (p. 129, my italics)

The final lines suggest that while it may be possible to find the perpetrator(s) of this crime, it is impossible to put an end to acts of political violence, since their origin is not only unknown but unknowable. Elsewhere, the text asserts that the root of the current malaise is to be found in a *cultural* legacy of violence and revenge, encapsulated in the image of the poisoned 'défroque' left behind by the Francoist general (e.g. p. 32), but the meaning of such images remains ambiguous. In fact, rather than implying that the outbreak of violence is related to a particular historical moment, violence is represented as an abstract force unrelated to the events of a particular historical series or to an analysable (if overdetermined) nexus of sociological, political and cultural causes.

The notion of a 'curse' carries associations of ahistorical predestination, as though violent acts were the direct expression of a national predisposition. Indeed, in *Les Géorgiques*, this 'curse' is referred to as 'quelque instinct, quelque réflexe ancestral une haine héréditairement transmise' (pp. 355-56). Simon is here alluding to the anarchist traditions of the Barcelona working class - the inhabitants of the 'faubourgs poussiéreux et jaunes'.⁴¹ The manifestation of this ancestral reflex is a hatred of the uniforms of state authority ('les vivantes personnifications de quelque chose qui, depuis des siècles, de père en fils et de mère en fille, avait représenté souffrance, humiliation et deuil', p. 356) but the discourse is still that of genetic inheritance.⁴² In addition, the use of

just as to who or what is behind the killing but also as to who or what has 'died'. The use of the verb 'morir' in this phrase is ungrammatical, since the verb is intransitive in Spanish and cannot be used transitively, unlike the verb 'matar', which means 'to kill'. The past participle would thus read 'matado' and not 'muerto'. Perhaps this is an indication of the illiteracy of many of Durruti's followers?

41. According to Thomas, '[t]he suburbs were all with the CNT' (1986, 657).

42. In *Histoire*, even in the description of the nineteenth century engraving of the city (pp. 159-69), Barcelona is identified with violence: 'une ville vouée, consacrée à l'avance [...] à la violence'. The metaphor is that of a chemical reaction that is bound to cause an explosion (p. 161). This could be read as a realist reference to the history of class violence in the city, particularly in the social upheavels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For

biological metaphors in the novel reinforces the impression that political violence is a (hereditary) disease which manifests itself in periodic outbreaks and which is incurable. One metaphor used to describe its proliferation is that of an epidemic (see p. 114), with the city suffering like a diseased human body.⁴³ The city and/or the revolutionary sickness with which it is inflicted is also personified as a mythical dying beast or a Leviathan:

peut-être tournaient-ils en rond dans la ville à la recherche de l'introuvable ennemi, de cette chose qui n'avait pas de nom, pas de visage, pas d'apparence, condamnés à errer sans fin comme ce juif de la légende qui ne pouvait trouver le repos, semblables à ces bancs d'oiseaux inquiets, plaintifs et sauvages qu'on voit voler interminablement en gémissant au-dessus de quelque chose d'invisible, quelque charogne, quelque bête agonisante [...] quelque Léviathan malade, commençant déjà, tout vivant, à se décomposer. (pp. 224-25)

The reference to the wandering Jew of medieval legend is another parabolic and infernal image of time as repetition and circularity. It also likens the city's inhabitants to pariahs eternally condemned to expiate an original sin. In combination, these two allusions imply that the Spanish revolution must be read as a further instance of a proverbial narrative. This impression is intensified by the implicit reference to that other Leviathan, Hobbes's treatise on government, written in 1651 against the background of his 'perception of the chaos and brutality of the English Civil War' (Scruton 1982, 204). According to Hobbes, man is ruled by pride and egotism and the state of nature is one of perpetual

Carroll, the allusion to violence refers to the repressive economic relations pertaining in the city and the reason the Civil War is already 'written there in nineteenth century Barcelona' is because it is 'inscribed between the lines in the perspectives and history contemporary viewers (readers) must bring to it'. He argues that the historical 'frame' of this representation of Barcelona is not closed because 'the space it constitutes is open to history, to the history [...] already inscribed and to be inscribed within it' (1982, 158). However, to represent the city as already inhabited by the future Civil War could equally suggest a predestined cycle of violence and political repression, and thus a historical closure.

43. The image of the diseased and dying body politic also recurs in *Les Géorgiques*, where the disease latent in the city in *Le Palace*, comes to personify the heart of the city itself, which becomes corpse-like: 'la vieille cité gothique de ce gris presque noir des tissus morts, aux ruelles étroites, à l'haleine moisie de cadavre l'énorme et monstrueux cancer gisant làsecrétant comme une espèce d'invisible pus, d'invisible et innommable déjection de cadavre' (pp. 320-21). As Labanyi points out in her discussion of the '98 writers, the use of such biological metaphors leads to the notion that history is 'suffered' rather than 'made' (1994, 144-47). It is interesting to relate this to the fatalism and stoicism inherent in Simon's vision of history, discussed in Chapter Three.

warfare: in order to be protected within a social framework, the individual must 'obey the sovereign in return for whatever rights the sovereign may guarantee' (ibid). There seems to be a similar view of human nature and the function of political institutions in *Le Palace*, since it is implied that, once conventional and institutional controls are removed, revolution unleashes an inherent and primal bloodlust (see also *Les Géorgiques*, p. 267).

There is a long tradition in Western literature and philosophy of representing war as a disease and society as a diseased or corrupted body, particularly in political critique: just one possible contemporary intertext here could be Camus's *La Peste*. Another could be Nietzschean philosophy (in *Le Sacre*, the stepfather refers to having read too much Nietzsche), which opposes decadent modern western culture to healthy classical Greek culture. Nietzsche used the basic tropes of cultural health and sickness and, in particular, the metaphor of the digestive system and of indigestion in connection with historical memory.⁴⁴ There might be an echo of this kind of Nietzschean discourse not only in the images of the city's blocked sewers but also in the gastric pain which makes the narrator descend into the 'urinoirs' on p. 222. Carroll similarly identifies the putrifying smell associated with the city as a metaphor for 'history itself' (1982, 111). However, it is not the obsession with the past *per se* but a *particular kind* of violent legacy that appears here to be causing the social blockage.⁴⁵

Thus another set of organic images associated with revolutionary Barcelona concerns 'taboo' bodily functions. Apart from (monstrous or unsuccessful) reproduction, the city is also personified as a sweating, smelling, digesting body (for instance, pp. 150-51). The American suggests that a good motto for the town - and for Spain as a whole - would be the pharmacy sign which reads 'Orina - Espantos - Sangre'; and, again, the city is repeatedly

44. One of his chief criticisms of German culture was that it failed to cope satisfactorily with the past, and one obvious way of expressing this medically was in terms of the digestion. Too much chewing over the past, he declares in his essay 'On the Benefits and Dangers of History for Life', 'damages and ultimately destroys a living system, whether it be a human being or a people or a culture' (quoted in Pasley 1978, 126-27).

45. Finally, there could even be an echo of the plague epidemic sent by Apollo to punish the Achaeans in the *Iliad* (see for instance *Le Palace*, pp. 150-51). Apart from Simon's apparently traditional use of such metaphors, he also deploys them to parody the attempts by

identified with decaying food and fecal matter (for instance p. 14 and p. 22).⁴⁶ Orr interprets the reference to Pantagruel on pp. 150-51 as ‘conjur[ing] up the gigantic, the corporeal and the earthy’ (1993, 16), the emphasis on the gigantic relating back to the monstrous size of *Le Palace*. The American also employs another, organic image of decay to allude to the corruption of the revolution: the pot of jam with its creeping layer of mould (see pp. 139-40). Again, in its hyper-materialism, this image is part of an anti-transcendent discourse on revolution that emphasises the centrality of elementary physical drives, as is explored further in Chapter Three.

In fact, Simon’s text appears to construct a form of what Bakhtin, referring to Rabelais, terms ‘grotesque realism’. According to Bakhtin, Rabelaisian grotesque realism draws on the positive, comic representations of the body in medieval folk culture to affirm the body’s materiality as a defence against ‘cosmic terror’. The latter is defined not just as the fear of individual bodily destruction but ‘the fear of all that which is materially huge and cannot be overcome by force’ (1994, 237). Bakhtin’s discussion of Rabelais defines the central images of grotesque realism as ‘the banquet, the grotesque devouring body and the underworld’, and as a discourse characterized by ‘[e]xaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness’ (1994, 226 and 237). The image of the banquet, is also present in Simon’s novel in the frequent references to food and the occasional carnivalesque images. However, what in Rabelais is a triumphal celebration and affirmation of life over death, in *Le Palace* becomes the occasion for images of scarcity, decay and death.

Moreover, there is little sign of that other aspect of the banquet referred to by Bakhtin, the ‘free and jocular speech’ in which high and low topics of conversation are mixed and ‘official, bigoted seriousness’ is mocked (1994, 231). While the American’s discourse of critical mockery is central to *Le Palace*, the Bakhtinian concept of affirmative, utopian, festive speech is not applicable to this kind of ‘fragmenting’ discourse. In fact, if we take Bakhtin’s theory further, Barcelona itself becomes a kind of Rabelaisian grotesque body.

Komintern agents and the secret police to ‘purge’ the Republican zone of what they consider to be its ‘diseased’ elements (see p. 268 of *Les Géorgiques*).

46. The same images are used in *Histoire* in the description of the city in the engraving (see p. 165).

since it is associated with those body parts and functions which in Rabelais's discourse are subject to (positive) exaggeration (see Bakhtin 1994, 232-34). There are constant references to the city's overblown, baroque architecture in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*. According to Bakhtin, the trope of the excessive body, all protusions and orifices, as opposed to the body which is 'closed, smooth and impenetrable' explains the prevalence of images of 'towers and subterranean passages' in Rabelais. However, the negativity of all the manifestations of this trope in Simon's texts must be stressed: the grotesque body is here not 'the inexhaustible vessel of birth and conception' (ibid), but diseased and haemorrhaging, if not already a corpse.

The prevalence in Rabelaisian grotesque realism of the image of the underworld can also be related in *Le Palace* to the image of the descent into the 'bowels' of the city. According to Bakhtin, 'debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism' (1994, 242). In terms of his depiction of the human body, Rabelais exalts what is considered by official medieval culture to be profane (the material acts of the body, and in particular its lower strata). He does the same with the conception of hell by giving it the comic, earthly and positive characteristics of a banquet and a carnival. Read through Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais, the 'urinoirs' in *Le Palace* would thus represent a fusion of Rabelasian imagery: they are associated with image of the city as a giant body, and in particular with the digestive function ('un royaume à la fois secret, caverneux et *intestinal*', p. 222). This kingdom is also associated with the final image of monstrous labour, and can be interpreted as a descent into the womb, a search for origins that, again, leads ultimately to death.

The final point in this section concerns the repetition of images and structures in the novel, for instance the recurrent use of images from the funeral. This has the obvious effect of associating death with the events of the revolution but, again, such repetition also suggests that such traumatic events are never fully consigned to history but are continually 'replayed'. This mythical dimension is also reinforced by the use of classical and other literary references in the Funeral section, and in the novel as a whole, as discussed below. Repetition is also represented as internal to the events of the revolution itself, as evidenced by the novel's predilection for images of circularity and by

its parodic use of the quest structure. Even its underlying principles of construction have effects on the thematic level if, as Jacques Leenhardt suggests, the novel's representation of the Spanish revolution is an extended illustration of the geometrical figure referred to in the epigraph:

Révolution: mouvement d'un mobile qui, parcourant une courbe fermée, repasse successivement par les mêmes points.

Roman (nouveau?): révolution d'un narrateur qui parcourant une courbe fermée, ressasse les mêmes points ressemblants.

Le Palace: roman à partir d'images de la Révolution espagnole de 1936, où l'histoire apparaît comme un cycle de tableaux et de poses ressemblant à ce qu'on nomme révolution. (Leenhardt 1986,122)⁴⁷

Finally, references to other revolutionary situations, namely 1789 and the Russian revolution of 1917 generalize the Spanish experience by turning it into the repetition of an earlier, archetypal event.⁴⁸ The section on 'The Vision of History' (see pp. 62-68 below) asks whether such a discourse is *inherently* unsuited to representing historical 'events' which are an essentially dynamic and temporally-extended complex of causes and effects. Within this discursive framework, can historical events be represented as anything *but* a disconnected succession of static images or *tableaux*?

However, to summarize, the revolution is represented as an essentially negative experience for the narrating subject. It is seen as a closed cycle of politically-motivated violence followed by reprisals, which then leads increasingly authoritarian government. On a formal level, these cycles are expressed by the circular construction of *Le Palace*, and by the epigrammatic reference to the spiral figure.

In addition, as Chapter Three will explore in more depth, the novels treat the Spanish revolution as a 'rite of passage' (in *Le Sacre du printemps*, the title makes this explicit). In all three texts, a foreign intellectual with *engagé* ideas undergoes a process of political disillusionment when confronted with the

47. Brewer states that the secondary or parasitical definition of revolution as repetition without progress also enters into conflict with, and parodies, 'official versions of the events of the revolution' (1995, 89).

48. See Carroll 1982, 39. As he comments, the Spanish Revolution is represented as one of 'those moments in history when "progress" seems to have stopped' and by focusing on such moments, 'Simon insists on the failure of history to institute itself as an entirely progressive, continuous process' (39).

realities - both banal and violent - of the Spanish revolution (see for example Brewer 1995, 90). Their experience of chaos leads to the protagonists' disengagement with revolutionary politics, and to their questioning of political narratives of progress. This disillusionment is represented as inevitable, and the younger man's experience is framed by the retrospective, ironising commentary of the protagonist's older self and/or an external narrator.⁴⁹ The use of the 'rite of passage' motif may be an intertextual attack on Malraux, since Sykes describes *L'Espoir* as a *bildungsroman* (see Sykes 1983, 126). O. in *Les Géorgiques* may differ from the other protagonists in terms of age and nationality, but it is in this novel that Simon's critique of the notion of revolution as bringing about social change is most fully developed.

Rather than the actual conflict, what is therefore foregrounded in the novels are its effects on a distanced (or alienated) observer/narrator. The narrative perspective on the war is always that of a foreigner and, furthermore, a foreigner who, with the exception of O., takes no active part in the fighting. The next section analyses the use of intertextual references in the novel arguing that, while being used to reinforce the negative representation of the revolution, particularly by erasing its specificity, they are principally used for parody and demystification.⁵⁰

Literary References

One general function of intertextual allusions is, on a meta-level, to signal the fictionality, or the literariness of a text, and to break the referential illusion, while the specific reference performs a thematic function. However, in *Le Palace*, the general function of such allusions is not usually to stress the fictionality of the events described, but either to comment on their singularity, that is, their departure from an archetypal narrative model, or, paradoxically, to confirm their archetypicality.

49. One more possible intertext for the 'rite of passage' motif is the myth of Orpheus in the underworld. However, as Michael Evans (1985) shows, references to initiation rites in Simon's novels are used in a demystifying, parodic way.

50. Again, for a discussion of the relationship between parody and 'postmodern' writing, see Brewer 1995, 73-111. She also discusses how Simon makes use of mythical references in such a way as to demystify the notion of a 'master myth' (24).

This apparent paradox is illuminated if we consider the explicit allusion to ‘[l]es Funérailles de Patrocle’ in the description of the the funeral, and thus to Homer’s epic war narrative, the *Iliad*.⁵¹ The reference could be intended parodically. By comparing Santiago’s funeral with a classical model - the magnificent funeral Achilles gives to ‘the man [he] loved beyond all other comrades’ (Book 18, Fagles 1990, 470) – it is revealed as deficient, the official pomp hollow and the grief of the crowds devoid of real intensity. Formally, Simon would be signalling the distance of his text from certain literary models of the heroic war narrative - in this case one of the great foundational texts of the Western literary canon – and, by implication, highlighting the non-transcendence of its content.

However, the reference to Patroclus’s death can also be read as straightforwardly thematic, emphasizing the brutality and waste of war, and reinforcing an anthropologizing view of political violence. In his introduction to Fagles’s 1990 translation of *The Iliad*, Bernard Knox says the title that best encapsulates the contents of the epic is not *The Iliad* (i.e. ‘a poem about Ilium’) but its opening line ‘the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles’. It is, in fact, Achilles’s rage and its disastrous consequences which are the main theme of the poem (1990, 3).⁵² Moreover, in Homer’s narrative the Achaean leaders are not idealized hero figures, but rather vicious, arrogant, greedy and murderous.

The allusion to the *Iliad* thus reinforces the more specific theme in *Le Palace* of a cycle of violence unleashed by an internal power struggle. In one sense, Patroclus’s death occurs as a result of the divisions and ferocious jostling over booty and position among the Achaeans (such as Achilles’s and Agamemnon’s quarrel over Briseis), as Achilles’s lament makes clear (see Book 18, p 471). Thus a second effect of the *Iliad* reference is to erase or at least question, the uniqueness and historical specificity of events in revolutionary Barcelona. The political dimension of the power struggle is stripped down to the expression of

51. The same reference recurs in *Les Géorgiques*, also in connection with the assassination of a popular leader and with a description of his funeral procession, which is a condensed version of this one (see pp. 341-42).

52. ‘Rage — Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters’ souls, but made their bodies carrion,

universal human emotions or impulses - greed, rage, the will to power - and hence the events are 'de-historicized'. Furthermore, such events recur cyclically: in this sense, Simon's representation of the Civil War conveys the same atmosphere of doom-laden inevitability as Homer's representation of the Trojan War. This impression is reinforced by the allusion in the account of the Paris assassination to an original and inaugural crime of murder, of which this is an echo (p. 97). The mythical idea of predestination is reinforced by the allusion to the sibylline oracles in the form of the female theatregoers whom the Italian passes.

The other major intertext in Section Three is Shakespearean tragedy. On p.109, the American, the voice of political scepticism, draws an analogy between a scene from Shakespeare and Santiago's murder. His allusion to a power struggle implies that some government members are directly or indirectly implicated in the murder (see pp. 108-109; p. 116). However, it is difficult to say exactly what the precise intertext is here, since the scene does not occur in either of the Shakespearean texts dealing most obviously with the themes of an internal power struggle and the murder of innocents to obtain political power, *Richard III* and *King John*.

In addition, in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*, there are implicit echoes of *Hamlet*. The American remarks that there are 'trop de pleureuses derrière le cercueil' (p. 109). The impotent cries of protest, symbolised by the flags and banners of the funeral procession, are associated firstly with a corpse, and finally with a ghost seeking vengeance (*Le Palace*, p. 106. See also *Les Géorgiques*, pp. 330-31). Apart from linking revolutionary ideals and aspirations with images of death and putrefaction (and here, fratricide), the ghost image is connected to the narrator's (vain) search for the truth of past experience.

The American also alludes to the nursery rhyme of 'The Death of Cock Robin' in relation to Santiago's murder, which carries connotations of political intrigue and betrayal. He equates the question mark over Santiago's murder with the question 'Who killed Cock Robin?', pouring scorn on the propagandistic attempts to attribute the murder to the work of mysterious (and

conveniently unidentified) 'Fifth Columnists' (pp. 39-40). According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, the rhyme originates either in the intrigues surrounding the downfall of Walpole's government in 1742, or the Norse legend of the death of Baldr (1951, 131-32). The latter myth has some interesting thematic and structural correspondences with *Le Palace*. Firstly, the theme of betrayal, since although the prophecy makes Baldr's death seem predestined and ultimately motiveless, it is brought about by Loki's cunning and deception. Secondly, Baldr is the perfect archetype for a hero: his death causes universal grief and he is given a magnificent funeral. Finally, the Gods send a messenger to the kingdom of the dead to plead (unsuccessfully) for Baldr's return: another echo of the Orpheus theme that is alluded to in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*.⁵³

The myth of Orpheus's descent into the underworld to recover Eurydice is the implicit intertext to the narrator's descent into the 'urinoirs' (as is made explicit later in *Les Géorgiques*). It is the culmination, literally and symbolically, of his search for the past, a search that brings him face to face with his ghosts, like Orpheus. The Orpheus myth is traditionally regarded as being concerned with 'the primordial accession or initiation to a hidden world of truth or idealism' (Evans 1985, 89). The 'cireurs' are explicitly described as the guardians or priests of this world, those who hold the key to its mysteries: 'des espèces de divinités ou plutôt d'officiants' (p. 222). Finally, the 'urinoirs', as an underground place associated with water, are an allusion to the river Styx.

However, even thus far it is obvious that Simon's use of the myth involves a strong parodic element. The guardians of the Orphic mysteries are poor creatures, misshapen and damaged (apart from the bootblacks, there is a 'bossu' and a 'manchot') or even *fake* ('contrefaits' and 'claudiquants', p. 222). Moreover, the transposition of the underworld to an underground toilet stresses, in Rabelaisian mode, the distance of this particular version of the myth from the classical model. According to Evans, in Virgil's version of the Orpheus myth in his *Georgics*, there is a sharp dividing line between the world of the living and that of the dead (represented by the numerous allusions to rivers). *Le Palace*

53. To stretch the parallels even further, Baldr's death leads to a cycle of destruction (albeit a delayed one), since the other Gods seek revenge on Loki, who is chained in eternal torment but fated one day to escape and unleash the apocalypse (see Page 1990, 47-55).

overall, and this sequence in particular, is marked by the invasion of the world of the living by the dead to the extent that all that finally remains are images of death. In the narrator's descent into the urinals, there is no transcendence, in the sense of the 'mythic triumph over death' that Evans describes as central to Virgil's version of the story (1985, 91). Similarly, unlike the Orphic mysteries or shamanistic initiation ceremonies, the initiate in Simon's texts does not gain access either to 'a more unified and enhanced conception of himself' or to the 'hidden world of truth and idealism' (Evans 1985, 95 & 89):

se tenant enfin là, dans l'espèce de silence puant et aquatique, parmi le froid scintillement des parois vernissées ... pouvant sentir ruisseler de nouveau sur lui cette espèce de chose gluante, tiède et poisseuse, seul maintenant: alors il entrerait, il monterait les trois étages et il pénétrerait dans le bureau et parmi les poutres calcinées ils seraient tous là, le maître d'école, l'Italien, le chauve, l'Américain - peut-être un peu desséchés, un peu momifiés, un peu poussiéreux - mais d'où s'exhalerait toujours ce quelque chose d'invincible, d'indestructible (pas une croyance, une foi, ni même une conviction, encore moins la certitude d'avoir raison: sachant simplement que, bien ou mal, les choses ne pouvaient être autrement) et ils l'accueilleraient.... sans même un signe visible de sympathie comme s'ils s'étaient toujours attendus à ce qu'il vienne finalement les retrouver. (p. 226-27)

Following the reference to something indestructible, the use of the phrase 'sachant simplement que, bien ou mal, les choses ne pouvaient être autrement' can be read as suggesting that the narrator has finally laid his ghosts to rest, accepting that what is past cannot be undone. However, this phrase is a hollow truism that offers no sense of consolation for, or resolution of, past suffering. It rather implies a fatalistic acceptance of past failure on the part of all those who participated in the revolution - an interpretation that reinforces the representation of the inhabitants and militiamen as essentially passive and powerless to influence the course of events. There is no sense that this accession to, or vision of, the past furnishes an answer to the question 'comment était-ce?' that would bind together the fragments of the narrator's experiences into a coherent and meaningful narrative. Finally, as has been discussed above, the sequence ends on a note of ambiguity and opacity which offers no sense of resolution to the hermeneutic enigma.

The Vision of History

As mentioned in the section on narrative time, the text's representation of time performs a symbolic function. As the epigraph suggests, the narrative moves backwards and forwards, passing through different temporal points but covering the same thematic ground, just as the revolution repeats a circular and similarly archetypal pattern of violence. The effect of this is to make the reader feel there is progression, but no progress, in the text.

Moreover, as discussed in relation to focalization, the main interest of the narrative always lies with the minutiae of individual subjective, and particularly visual, perception, and events are related as a series of snapshots or disconnected moments. As stated above, the pictorial references to a series of stills or to neon arrows function on a meta-fictional level as a symbol of Simon's phenomenological aesthetic, which aims to reproduce in textual form the workings of individual perception, represented as the continuous juxtaposition and/or superposition of separate fragments. The question asked was whether the text implies that any arrangement of these perceptual/textual fragments into a coherent causal narrative sequence is a violation of them, and what this means for notions of causality.

Deguy's notion of the 'monadic' narrative seems to describe accurately the kind of discourse symbolized by the image of the neon arrows. As discussed on pp.36-37 above, he argues that the American/Intellectual's linguistic 'brouillage' represents an attempt to find a different, poetic order of meaning based on the linking of 'monade[s] explosive[s] de l'instant' and that the search for such an order constitutes an attack on the very notion of narrative sequence. This is presumably because, in the 'monadic' narrative, there are no causal sequences (only associative ones?), therefore 'le sens ne s'étire pas dans une suite telle que l'enchaînement sensé qui le retracerait parviendrait à le saisir' (1962, 1024). For Deguy, the subversive charge of this alternative 'poetic' discourse is ultimately limited, since all the reader is left with is a series of isolated impressions or images.

Another visual comparison made is between the experience and narration of the assassination and the graphic drawings on the covers of sensationalist

magazines (pp. 93-94). Deguy also picks up on this analogy and connects it with the defamiliarizing, fragmentary descriptive style used in the novel to narrate charged and violent moments - a style he characterises as typical of the 'faits divers' (1962, 1018, n. 9). Within the framework of Deguy's general argument about narrative focalization in the novel, such frozen, static images, in their momentary and seemingly random appearance and disappearance, cannot be contextualised, let alone fitted into any transcendent narrative, and hence they remain essentially meaningless.⁵⁴ The overall effect of representing experience in this way is to suggest that the causality ascribed to events within historical narratives is not extra-discursive but exists only as a function of narrativisation, a point discussed further in Chapter Three.

Indeed, the analogy with the 'faits divers' suggests two levels of disturbance of representation. Firstly, the event is intentionally exaggerated by being self-consciously mediated in terms of sensationalized graphic images. This draws the reader's attention not just to the existence of signifying processes in general, thus diluting reader identification, but, more specifically, to the hackneyed associations of this particular form of discourse, which typically presents such events without any meaningful discussion of their historical, social or cultural context. This kind of de-contextualisation is also found in 'heroic' or romanticised narratives of political upheaval, according to Simon. Thus he seems to want to distinguish his representations of historically-charged events such as the assassination - or the revolution itself - both from the crude stereotypes of popular culture and from the empty commonplaces of political discourse (both of which discourses inform the omnipresent revolutionary posters).⁵⁵

In *Les Géorgiques*, the description of the photograph of the militiamen on the train is one example of how the reader is seemingly warned against this

54. Carroll also says that the reader is denied any way of transcending positively the negativity in the text because of the lack of historical contextualization, i.e. no way to assign the representation to a 'place' and 'sense' in history (1982, 112).

55. See *Le Palace*, pp. 177-79. The isolation and fragmentation of the images and texts of various superimposed posters on the burnt-out church is presumably intended to focus the reader's attention on their materiality, and hence their fragility, but also their textuality, and on the clichéd and simplisitic nature of the discourse which informs them. The superposition of the newspaper headlines on pp. 29-30 could also be related to this kind of representational disturbance.

kind of over-simplification (pp. 259-62). This point is explored in Chapter Three but, to summarize, the description draws our attention to the historical context in which such images are produced and received. It suggests that our knowledge of historical events is always inevitably mediated or even manipulated, whether by overtly propagandistic representations or in subtler forms.

However, as Deguy also points out, *Le Palace* itself does not offer any alternative contextualisation process: events such as the assassination are not presented in relation to any wider, sense-making narrative, such as the political discourse of anarchism. When the assassination is compared to the magazine cover, the text seems rather to be expressing an existential view that, ultimately, it is impossible to capture the reality of present (past) perceptions and experiences, even by means of frozen snapshot images. The text suggests that because subjective experience is precisely subjective, it is uncommunicable and thus intrinsically unrepresentable - or rather, *invisible* ('ce qui se passait réellement n'était pas visible, impossible à représenter par un dessin ou même une photographie en admettant qu'un photographe de presse ait eu la chance de se trouver là', p. 94). This can be related to Simon's ontological privileging of the visibility/invisibility opposition: it is significant because, on a meta-narrative level, it relates to the failure of the narrator's quest to get to grips with the reality of past experience (the recurring question 'comment était-ce?').

Deguy argues that, in the final analysis, the representational content and formal structuring of *Le Palace* both generates and is generated by a particular *vision* of history: 'l'histoire des hommes comme fleuve de pus, océan charnier, putréfaction sans commencement ni fin' (1962, 1024). He argues that there are various, homologous representations of history in the text: history as an endless, yet unchanging stream of destruction; history as phantasmagoric spectacle, as a series of static *tableaux-vivants*; or, finally, history as *grand-guignol*.⁵⁶ What

56. The metaphor of the city as a diseased corpse is extended to 'History' itself ('l'impitoyable, arrogante et mystérieuse Histoire couverte de pus, d'infects et inguérissables stigmates'; p.18). Simon's use of biological metaphors and his representation of historical events as static, two-dimensional *tableaux* can be compared with the techniques deployed by the Generation of '98 writers to claim a mythical historical continuity for the Spanish nation and national character (see Labanyi 1994, especially 137-47). Labanyi deconstructs the latter's attempts to 'naturaliz[e] history' using Barthes's insights (in his 1957 essay 'Le mythe aujourd'hui'). According to Labanyi, Barthes's essay shows how 'the "naturalization"

these images have in common is that they are described as if perceived in momentary glimpses by a distanced observer; in other words, they are the product of an alienated narrative 'gaze'.

For Deguy, this state of alienation both stems from, and reinforces, a state of *hébétude*, itself rooted in an experience of psychological trauma. Carroll, on the other hand, relates Simon's privileging of visual, particularly photographic or cinematic representations to a critique of traditional representations of the subject. The latter are seen as repressing the fact that alienation is the foundation of the subject: there is no authentic, original presence grounding the representation of subjectivity, only the representation or 'copy' itself, which represents 'a conflictual divided space which gives rise to a multitude of possible interpretations' (1982, 114-15). Celia Britton has also criticised the phenomenological presuppositions of Deguy's own critique on the grounds that it disregards the element of desire bound up with the representation of vision in Simon's texts. For her, Simon's privileging of a 'derealized' form of the visible is more likely to be an effect of 'phantasy' than of alienation (1987, 7). She relates this representational practice to the 'mirage effect' in his texts, where 'images of presence' are produced and then 'decomposed' (1987, 31; see also 31-33 & 69-71). Her example is the opening description/imaginary reconstruction of the room in the hotel, its occupants and their conversation, which is preceded by a 'purely textual play of variation' (1987, 31), the juxtaposition of the newspaper headlines (*Le Palace*, pp. 32-33).

While agreeing that this passage can be read in anti-realist way, reminding the reader that this description is generated by similar textual combinations, it is also possible to give this passage a straight-forwardly thematic reading. The fragmentation, and hence the de-familiarization, of the newspaper headlines reminds us that the Spanish conflict (like any conflictual historical event) is made of words and images. That is, mediated by all kinds of representation, including press coverage, thus linking with the general themes of propaganda and censorship, and more specifically with the concealed power

of history is a brilliant device for legitimizing on the grounds of necessity that which cannot be legitimized on moral grounds'. Such a process of 'naturalization' occurs via a rhetorical process in which objects are taken out of their historical context and presented 'as if they were fixed and given' (see 1994, 128-9).

struggle over the representation of the conflict occurring on the Republican side. A cover-up with which, in fact, both domestic and foreign press are complicit.

Deguy's phenomenological view indeed uses an expressive model of language, where words are 'the direct, unmediated trace of the look' (Britton 1987, 7). It can thus be criticised for not paying adequate attention to the 'generative' or anti-realist aspects of the text. However, this does not negate a reading of narrative action in *Le Palace* in subjective realist terms as the vision of an alienated 'look'. The realist credentials of the remembered images are undecidable: the point of view in the 'mirage' is unstable or shifting, because 'we are not sure whether the mirage is a realist representation (of past existential reality) or not' (Britton 1987, 31).

Moreover, even if the texts's emphasis on visual perception is unrelated to any overall economy of plot, that is, concerned with 'de-realized', *phantasised* rather than *perceived* visual representations, does this negate a reading of this discourse and these representations in terms of their 'narrativity', or 'cultural legacies' (as Brewer puts it), including their possible ideological content? Simon's text itself actively draws our attention to such cultural mediations. Deguy's characterisation of the historical vision in *Le Palace* as a 'de-realized' hallucination highlights, firstly, the structure of repetition the text builds into the event of revolution and; secondly, its challenge to a particular view of the causal relations between characters' psychological states, their actions, and events in the world. According to Deguy, it is this relationship which is constitutive of realist literary discourse, traditionally conceived (1962, 1028).

As regards the novel's emphasis on repetition rather than on chronological progression, the opening section of *Le Palace* makes an analogy between the entry and exit of objects from the hotel and the eternal, self-regulating movement of the levels of liquid in 'des vases communicants'. This metaphor is then explicitly extended to the workings of 'la mystérieuse Histoire et les destins du monde' (p. 12). This can be read as a sarcastic jibe at the notion of history with a capital 'H', that is, the conception of a hidden set of laws working itself out in temporal events or a telos of inexorable progress. The Simonian metaphor is an image of stasis, not progress, since what occurs is

merely a readjustment of existing forces: this 'closed' figure is comparable to the 'revolution' described in the epigraph.

Simon also uses the inventory to critique the notion of historical progress. On p. 18, the text lists the streetnames, referring to Catholic saints, historical events, and state institutions, a form of inventory of the nation's ills. Space and time merge to form a historical and cultural map of the state of the nation, on which the salient features are religious intolerance, war, feudalism, dogmatism and, in the aesthetic sphere, a taste for the overblown and the baroque. The implication is that Spain cannot escape this historical legacy of suffering and extremism. However, this is not exactly 'historical', since it rests on the notion of the existence of an unchanging Spanish 'national character' (discussed further in Chapter Three).

The inventory does not merely highlight and parody the ways in which (generically conceived) realist narratives carve up experience and events, for example fitting them into a neatly chronological narrative, or assigning them to a model of psychological causation. It is also an alternative way of structuring the narrative; in this example, around the associations conjured up by the list of street names. Such a technique allows the narrator's imagination to roam in the kind of 'aventure singulière du narrateur' referred to by Britton (1994, 101-07), thus the novel may be playing on the etymological link between *inventory* and *invention*. Sykes sees the combined technique of generating narrative sequences via association and the repetition of sounds and words as characteristic of the narrative as a whole (1983, 131), quoting Simon's assertion that his texts are structured around 'une architecture purement sensorielle' (p. 129). However, the associations conjured up by the street names are not idiosyncratic sensorial images nor based on phonic or graphic associations, but are primarily historical. Finally, to return to Deguy's critique, according to him Simon's attack on conventional realist causality is linked through the vision of history it generates to wider intellectual and political currents, namely a philosophical scepticism and a political quietism.⁵⁷ Britton similarly notes Simon's political and historical pessimism (1993, 3-4) and, furthermore, states that 'the roots of this

57. Although accepting 'dans une certaine mesure' Deguy's analysis of the text, Simon rejected these conclusions (1986, 68-69).

pessimism lie in his earlier encounter with war, in Spain' (1993, 3). The precise forms of this pessimism are explored in Chapter Three.

History and Fiction

Simon's refusal to enter into the nuances of the complex historical background to the 'fictional' events depicted in the text could stem from a theoretical resistance to the blurring of generic boundaries; to the invasion of the fictional realm by 'inappropriate' material and considerations (for instance, detailed historical explanation). This returns us to the more general question of the aesthetic premises of the narrative. Apart from its declared formalist premise, and its subversion of elements of what Deguy calls 'traditional' psychological realism, *Le Palace* is thematically 'anti-realist' because Simon attempts, in the abstract, to differentiate it from two distinct but related genres. These are historical texts and the kind of first-person reportage/testimony epitomized by *Homage to Catalonia*.

Simon tries to distance his text from these genres in two ways: firstly, it is not an account of a particular set of historical events, as this would require 'un travail d'historien' (and thus presumably merit wider sociological and historical interest). Although it does have the same historical referent, his text is an impressionistic take on revolutionary Barcelona, concerned not with 'the revolution' but 'my revolution'. This account is then given a further layer of mediation: it is not autobiographical in the strict sense of the term, but a fictionalisation of first-hand experience: '*Le Palace* ne mérite que le nom de *rêve* sur la révolution espagnole' (my italics) (Chapsal 1961, 32). Thus Simon's categorization of *Le Palace* as 'fiction' rests, firstly, on the text's supposedly 'dreamlike' quality, which stems from its essentially subjective and 'flawed' authorial perspective (the novelist having, by definition, an 'aperçu faux et subjectif des choses'). Secondly, it is more concerned with 'form' than 'content' (Chapsal 1961, 32). In the 1974 *Colloque*, Simon rejects outright the historical referentiality of *Le Palace* by emphasising the formalist principles underpinning its construction (1986, 68).

However, Simon's definition of 'fiction' is over-emphatic and essentialising, dependent on the existence of a category of writing to which the opposite values of 'fact', 'objectivity', and the primacy of 'content' can be assigned: historical discourse. Yet even if one accepts Simon's essentially modernist definition of fiction as prioritising questions of narrative form over 'content', in practice *Le Palace* undermines any such division, as has been seen. In the final analysis, the novel's force is not decreased by reading it referentially - that is, in relation to a specific historical context - nor do its 'formal' effects negate such a reading.⁵⁸ Indeed, it remains perfectly possible to read the novel in a representational or referential manner - for instance, as Dällenbach does, as 'le récit (policier) de la liquidation d'un révolutionnaire sceptique et devenu trop bavard' (1988, 41). Moreover, in formal terms, alongside its 'anti-realist' use of realist notation, the text makes frequent use of the 'comme si' structure and of the demonstrative pronoun. Both assume the existence of a shared endoxal code between reader and writer and are identified by Barthes as defining elements of the classical text.⁵⁹ The text thus reads as the product of a subjective or phenomenological realism, aiming to produce the kind of reality effects sanctioned by Simon's own critical pronouncements (see Sykes 1983, especially p. 128).

As stated, Simon's text is explicitly conceived in opposition to a particular literary model: Malraux's *L'Espoir*. Putting aside Simon's definition of Malraux's account of the war as over-romanticising or 'comic-book', his objections to the text also involve an argument about what constitutes realism. This argument rejects authorial omniscience and ultimately revolves around an epistemological concern: how can Malraux relate things of which he has had no direct experience ('[Malraux] raconte des choses qu'il n'a pas *perçues* lui-même')? Evidently, the emphasis on subjective experience as the basis of knowledge and, more specifically, on individual *perception*, as the basis of

58. 'Historical context' here could denote not simply what Ricardou calls 'la situation de la fiction' (the early months of the Civil War) but also what he calls 'la situation de narration' (the late 1950's/early 1960's in France).

59. Some of the numerous examples from the first section are: 'une de ces gravures'; 'cette peinture gris Trianon'; 'cette malédiction'. Culler describes how demonstrative pronouns, in drawing on culture stereotypes, are one way of constituting 'second-order' *vraisemblance* (1975, 140-43).

artistic vision, can be traced back to Simon's phenomenological prejudices: true realism is the (re)construction of the associative patterns of individual perception (especially visual perception), emotion and memory.

The acknowledgement of specific intertexts - at least as concerns *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques* - means that, as Leenhardt points out, the real referent of *Le Palace* (and of all Simon's representations of the Civil War) is 'une certaine littérature sur cette guerre ce discours institué et convenu de l'héroïsme' (1986, 125), as is explored further in Chapter Three. The rejection of such a discourse involves the rejection of a certain notion of *vraisemblance*:

la revendication d'un discours non-vraisemblable, invraisemblable, c'est-à-dire ici un discours non-héroïque, non-optimiste, un discours non-républicain [qui] travaille à tous les niveaux, syntaxe, modes, temps, mais aussi tabous, habitudes, bienséances. (Leenhardt 1986, 125)

However, Leenhardt, like Prendergast, recognises that *vraisemblance* is derived from (socially and historically determined) cultural models of probability (for instance, Prendergast 1986, 51). It is not possible, particularly in a text which has a specific historical referent, to do away with the notion of *vraisemblance* without, as Prendergast puts it, 'sliding off the map of intelligibility altogether' (1986, 217; also pp. 73-79; 248-53). In fact, Simon's text constructs an alternative *vraisemblance* - a point Leenhardt makes when he says that Simon's rejection of 'literary realism' involves the rejection of a particular '*code de [l]a vérité*' (1986, 121).

However, Simon's rejection of a certain kind of discourse on the Civil War is not simply an aesthetic choice: Leenhardt highlights the ideological stakes involved in claiming a particular representation is 'realist', as does Prendergast (1986, 121 & 248). Sykes has explored how the very different aesthetic presuppositions underlying *Le Palace* and *L'Espoir*, are, ultimately, informed by distinct and complex conceptions of the nature of historical writing - and of historical processes:

Simon is [...] offering a new definition of the novel, consistent with his view that memory betrays history, that individual uncertainties confound any collective view, and that the telling of historical tales is fraught with the dangers involved in the play of literary language. (1983, 129)

There is, in fact, a double movement in the novel, which oscillates between explicit ideological comment and the use of (more or less veiled) allusion. For instance, the text refers to the divisions within the Republican ranks, yet resists entering into the complexities of the real historical moment in other than in archetypal terms. This could be partly ascribed to indifference on the part of the author - possibly anticipating that of the reader - towards the more arcane doctrinal differences existing between the various factions. However, it can also be seen as symptomatic of an ambivalence at the heart of both *Le Palace* and Simon's critique of Orwell in *Les Géorgiques*: the attempt both to engage with a specific, ideological discourse, and yet to remain on the level of universal and archetypal representations. Chapter Three considers in more detail the ideological effects of *Le Palace*'s espousal of both phenomenological realist and defamiliarizing formal elements in its discussion of Part IV of *Les Géorgiques*.

Chapter Two

Introduction

This Chapter compares the treatment of the Civil War in Simon's texts with its representation in three of Marsé's texts: *Si te dicen que caí* (1973); *Un día volveré* (1982) and *El embrujo de Shanghai* (1993).¹ The analysis of the texts will focus on (i) the time period and events represented; (ii) the treatment of narrative time; (iii) the setting, namely the representation of Barcelona and (iv) characterization, focusing on the representation of the main set of protagonists, the children and the *maquis*. Narrative focalization will be considered principally in sections (ii) and (iv). Finally, the Chapter considers briefly the representation of the Civil War through the characterization of the *maquis* in the novels. However, it should be noted that divisions between the different sections are not watertight and often material is discussed in more than one section. This applies particularly to the section on characterization: because Marsé's novels are driven by a realist conception of character, the most detailed discussion of plot occurs in Section Four, and not in Section One.

Despite the narrative complexity of *Si te dicen*, as mentioned in the Introduction, this Chapter will focus principally on a realist reading of the text's thematics. However, it will also deal with formal questions of narrative construction, particularly in relation to the treatment of narrative time, and the text's self-conscious allusions to popular cultural forms such as films and comics. It argues that, in all Marsé's texts, these allusions also function thematically, as (often ironic) references to the models of heroic masculinity underpinning not only Nationalist mythology but also the discourse of the revolutionary Left.

Narrative Events

Unlike Simon's texts, Marsé's texts are located firmly in both time and space: '[b]ásico en la novelística de Juan Marsé es su concreta situación en el espacio y el tiempo' (Amell 1984, 14). Marsé has often underlined the importance of memory and

1. The unrevised version of *Si te dicen* is used, in the 1985 Cátedra edition: the reasons for this and the differences between original and revised editions are discussed below.

autobiographical elements in his writing, asserting that one function of the novelist is to be ‘un cronista de su época’ (Samaniego 1993, 379). This epoch is for Marsé principally the postwar period, yet the Civil War is omnipresent in his texts, even if the referential accuracy of the author’s memories should be treated with some scepticism.

The most obvious reason is because he chooses to present his autobiographical memories in the form of *fictional* texts. Secondly, because the original events which form their referent may have been overlaid by a retrospective process of selection and interpretation becoming, as Marsé admits in relation to the image of the murdered Carmen Broto ‘recuerdos que he mitificado con el paso del tiempo’ (Samaniego 1990, 376). One further explicit layer of cultural mediation is the ‘mitologías de la violencia juvenil’ promoted by the comic books and Hollywood gangster movies devoured by Marsé’s adolescent protagonists (Amell 1984, 110). Indeed, the difficulty of separating the actual experience of events from both cultural mediations and the retrospective meanings and emotional resonances they later acquire is a key theme of Marsé’s texts.

As ‘post-censorship’ novels, the three texts analysed differ in their overt and unflinching representation of the Franco period and the Civil War from Marsé’s earlier, more implicit critiques - with the exception of the original edition of *Si te dicen* (first published 1973). However, the latter’s publishing history in fact lends weight to the argument that its critique of Francoism is overt: originally published in Mexico, on its presentation to the ‘consulta previa’ in Autumn 1973, changes to 61 pages were demanded (See Amell 1984, 21 and Labanyi 1989, 137). When Seix Barral printed 3,000 copies of the uncensored text in September 1976 they were confiscated, and the first Spanish edition was not finally published until February 1977.

Si te dicen is the most difficult of Marsé’s novels to discuss in realist terms of plot mainly because of the formal (and thematic) centrality of the *aventi*.² This makes it difficult to distinguish on the internal level of the narrative between those events that are referential, and those that are products of the boys’ imagination. Marsé comments:

el tema de *Si te dicen que caí* está organizado sobre una célula narrativa que es completamente imaginativa, que es la de los niños, en la cual, mientras manipulan elementos reales de la verdad, de la crónica ciudadana, incluyen al mismo tiempo invenciones personales y mitologías de la violencia juvenil. (Amell 1984, 114)

On a formal level, the narrative mimics the conventions of oral story-telling, and is constructed out of a multiplicity of narrative voices which may or may not be reliable; ‘voces que rondan la impostura y el equívoco’ (Marsé 1989, 5; see also Labanyi 1989, especially 150-52). The reader is often given multiple accounts of events (such as Ramona/Aurora and Carmen/Menhu’s death, or Marcos’s fate). It is often impossible to determine who precisely is speaking, what is occurring and when, and whether or not this is an *aventi* (see Champeau 1983, 364-65; Amell 1984, 115-16; 119-22; Labanyi 1989, especially 153-60).

Secondly, apart from the repetition of verbs of narration (*contar*, *decir* and so on), and explicit references to the act of storytelling, there are unmarked shifts in the text between focalizers both within, and between, the different levels of the narrative. This means that every event narrated, whether self-consciously marked as an *aventi* or not, is capable of being put into quotation marks. There are shifts on the internal level of the narrative between the various narrators (for instance, Sarnita and Java); and also between these narrators and the characters in the stories they tell. Finally, there are shifts between this narrative level and the comments of an external narrator.

It is the latter which normally provide a frame for the characters’ dialogues, descriptions, thoughts and storytelling or mark out the boundaries of the diegesis. In *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture*, Barthes describes this as one hallmark of the realist novel, as outlined in the Introduction. In *Si te dicen*, the boundaries of this frame narrative are unstable, undermining the authority of the external narrator. Importantly, this affects even those episodes that, apparently, have the classical diegetic frame: the adventures of the *maquis*. Since the *maquis* crop up time and time again in the boys’ stories, the reader becomes increasingly uncertain whether some or all of the *maquis* episodes are part of an *aventi*. In addition, the external narrator’s voice in these episodes sometimes merges with that of one of the principal child storytellers, Sarnita.³

However, *Si te dicen* is explicitly conceived by Marsé partly as a straightforward ‘crónica negra’ of a particular location in the Francoist Spain of the forties:

2. Compared to *Si te dicen*, White says that *Un día* is ‘a deceptively easy read’ (1992, 106).

3. See for example the description of el Taylor (p. 97 & p. 327); and how the *maquis* ‘warning to Luisito Lage’s mother not to respond to the letter merges into Sarnita’s description of Luisito’s visit to the cheka (p. 327).

Si te dicen....., por ejemplo, es la historia de un barrio. No tiene ninguna pretensión de dar una visión totalizadora del franquismo en los años cuarenta. Pero, claro está, la novela ofrece una idea de eso; y no sólo de la represión política, sino también del hambre, del miedo, de la miseria moral del país, de la corrupción en todos los niveles (in Sinnigen 1979, 118; see also Garvey 1980, 377 and 386)

Again, despite the above qualification, Marsé's fictional account of this 'década atroz' (Sherzer 1982, 44) does function as a more general political and social critique of Francoism. This is evident both from the novel itself, and from Marsé's description of the purpose of the *aventi* in his articles, 'La *aventi* secuestrada' and 'Miedo a la memoria de un pueblo' (in *Confidencias de un chorizo*, 1977). However, Marsé rejects the label of a 'political writer' (see Sherzer 1982, 43-44). According to Amell, the novel does not contain 'una tesis antifalangista', that is, it does not work on the level of explicit propaganda, but rather its antifalangism is implicit in its representation of events, place and its choice of focalizers, as explored below.

The anti-regime perspective of the novel can also be inferred from the few brief allusions to pre-war Republican Barcelona. For instance, there are references to the copies of *Crónica* thrown out by the Baronesa (p. 190), and to the pictures of Republican stars on the walls of Marcos's hideout: 'aquella acumulación desesperada y juvenil de ídolos en pleno esfuerzo y chicas guapas en maillot, una exuberante alegría de vivir fragmentada y dispersa en las paredes como una memoria estrellada' (p. 283). Labanyi regards the latter image as also functioning on a meta-representational level, drawing attention to the way history is converted into myth by both the political Right and the Left. The Republican press has taken these images out of their historical context and converted them into archetypal, fantasy images (1989, 140). Nonetheless, they are still visual reminders of a period of cultural vibrancy, and of a popular participation in cultural, political and social life which provide a powerful contrast to the misery and repression of the postwar.

The novel deals with all the aspects of life under Franco outlined by Marsé in the quote above, but its principal focus lies with the political repression carried out by the regime after their victory. This is shown specifically in the Galáns' pursuit of Aurora and Marcos, the activities of the *maquis*, and the torture, imprisonment or execution of republican prisoners such as Lage (pp. 213-14). It is also conveyed by the constant allusions to denunciations, interrogations, and confessions (see, for instance, the *aventi* about Luisito's death, pp. 18-21; also Labanyi 1989, 141-43). On one

occasion, after a series of descriptions of the *maquis*' exploits, an anonymous narrator (later identified as 'un muchacho del Carmelo') comments sarcastically on the sense of omnipresent repression and betrayal which underpin the Nationalist myth of the dawning of a new era of 'peace':

Pensamos sí. Decimos no. Pensamos esto no durará, aguantemos. No volverán a oírse las sirenas de alarma, es cierto. El himno nacional acompaña la elevación de la hostia. Ya no hay bocas de refugios vomitando a la noche aullidos de madre, ya no volverán por el cielo a matar niños; a partir de ahora, chavales, el peligro acechará en todas partes y en ninguna, la amenaza será invisible y constante. (p. 110)⁴

Again, as has been highlighted by critics, one effect of the totalitarian political situation in the forties was the lack of accurate information, substituted potentially by either regime propaganda or popular myth. This is reflected on a formal level by the existence of multiple versions of the same event, of multiple narrators, and by the centrality of the *aventi*. As Champeau remarks:

Ce travail de la discordance, lié à la pratique constante de l'indétermination et au chevauchement de différentes lignes de récit, introduit le lecteur dans un monde insaisissable où toute certitude est impossible. A un premier niveau, le roman l'oblige à partager le désarroi des Espagnols à une époque où on l'avait conscience de vivre dans un monde absurde et chaotique, plus fantastique que les "*aventis*" des gamins. (Champeau 1983, 377; see also Gould Levine 1979, 309; Sherzer 1985, 40; Labanyi 1989, 137-38)

Champeau quotes Marsé as endorsing this reading: 'yo pretendía [...] dar una impresión de ambigüedad y confusión que es una tentativa consciente que yo quería asegurar. Es la realidad que entonces se vivía en España' (1983, 377, n. 9; see also Mangini 1991, especially 71-77).

Moreover, Labanyi sees the use of the *aventi*, the self-conscious allusions to the act of narration, and the doubt generated over the truth status of the events narrated, as foregrounding the question of narrative authority, and as such directly linked to the thematic critique of Francoism. The text is implicitly bringing into question the authority of the 'mythohistoriography' of the Franco regime - the political and cultural

4. See also p. 282, where Sarnita says: 'hoy todo son rumores y embustes y revanchas y hasta fusilamientos cada nuevo amanecer en la playa, dicen, patrañas inventadas por los rojos que aún quedan, camarada, ya sabe, diarrea cerebral'.

narrative constructed by the Nationalists around the abuse of national and religious myth, and via censorship and propaganda (Labanyi 1989, Chapters 2 and 5). Chapter Four discusses how, by mixing fictional and realist elements and through its excess production of meaning, the text mimics not just on the level of content but also on the level of form a period dominated by the official manipulation of information and generalized paranoia. This is encapsulated in the text by the reference to ‘denuncias y chivatazos, [...] redadas y registros’ (*Si te dicen*, p. 113).⁵

In *Si te dicen*, the references to pre- and civil-war Barcelona relate to the central structuring enigma of the novel, the search for Aurora Nin/Ramona, the ‘puta roja’ (p. 308). One suggested motivation for the Galán family’s search is to take revenge for the execution of Conrado’s father. Aurora’s story is recounted on pp. 174-80 and pp. 266-73. The second account is more detailed, but both are dubious. In the first passage, Aurora’s story is supposedly told by la Fueguiña playing Aurora during one of the boys’ ‘funciones’. However, la Fueguiña confuses Aurora’s story with that of Menchu (p.176). Moreover, the references to a listener, ‘Hermana’ (p. 177 and p. 180), further distance the story’s origin by implying that this is a memory - or a fictionalised account? - of the boys’ re-enactment of Aurora’s story told to Sor Paulina by the adult Nito.

In the second passage, the narrative voice is supposedly Aurora, telling her own story to Java. However, it is preceded and followed by passages focalized through Sarnita and the other boys listening to his and Java’s (probably invented) account of their experiences with prostitutes. Moreover, it switches between an external focalizer (Java’s thoughts described by an unknown third person narrator) and internal focalizers (Sarnita and Martín). In short, in neither case is the narrative voice or focalizer of the story clearly established, and hence its referential or fictional status remains unclear. However, the realist notation included in this second account of Aurora’s pre-war and wartime experiences is worth analysing in more detail (see pp. 271-73).

Firstly, there are allusions to locations in Barcelona associated with the POUM and the Anarchists: according to *Homage*, ‘[t]he Hotel Falcón was a sort of boarding-house maintained by the POUM and used chiefly by militiamen on leave’ and the Café Moka was located next door to the POUM Executive Building and occupied on 2 May

5. See also Sherzer on the theme of alienation in the novel (1982, 208-09) and Marsé’s comments in Samaniego (1993, 384-85).

1937 by the Assault Guards used to crush the POUM (Orwell 1989, 102 and 109). There is also an implicit reference to Orwell on the roof of the cine Poliorama (p. 271; Orwell 1989, 110 and 113). These implicit historico-literary references, along with the explicit mention of the attack on the CNT-controlled Telefónica, date this episode to the early days of May 1937: the attack took place on 3 May, and the fighting was over by 8 May (see Preston 1986, 185; Thomas 1986, 654-60).

There are also references to the activities of the anarchists, particularly the dissident (anti-government) anarchists, and the POUM: that is, those groups who supported the 'revolution or fascism' line (discussed in Chapter Three). The passage suggests that Artemi Nin and Pedro, Aurora's lover, are anarchists, since they wear the anarchist colours of red and black. Elsewhere it is suggested they belong to the *Amigos de Durruti* (p. 266): it is to Durruti that Aurora is supposed to deliver the microfilm sewn under her skin (p. 288). According to Hugh Thomas, the *Amigos* were 'an extreme anarchist groupuscule' who supported the POUM's calls to continue the revolution, dissolve the Spanish parliament, and establish a form of government by collectivist committees (Thomas 1986, 656; see also Graham 1999, n.127). In addition, Marcos is supposed to have first gone into hiding to escape the Communist purge of the POUM (see p. 285 and p. 309).

The reference to the 'Patrullas de Control' (p. 271) also alludes to the (mainly anarchist) groups which administered 'revolutionary' justice in the Republican zone, during the early phase of the war (see Thomas 1986, 278-79). Señor Galán is being taken on a 'paseo', and central to this passage and the one on pp. 207-08, where this event is replayed as Java and Aurora watch the film *Arsenio Lupin*, is the theme of mistaken identity. Labanyi and other critics (for instance Fiddian and Evans, 1988) link this theme to the motif of doubles in the novel, and thus to the blurring of boundaries between characters, locations and, on a meta-level, reality and fiction.

Again, the veracity of this account of señor Galán's execution is problematised by the interweaving of Aurora's story with cinematic elements, where her ostensible memory is triggered by, and merges with, the postwar film (see Labanyi 1989, 165; see also note 35 below).⁶ In addition, Aurora's story is explicitly referred to as part of an

6. Another way of reading the numerous allusions to film images in *Si te dicen*, and in all Marsé's novels, is to relate them to the repression of the memory of the Civil War in the postwar period, and, more generally, to the problematic status of historical representation. Labanyi sees such images in Marsé's texts as 'spectral' visual fragments that 'allow the past to endure as a

aventi (p. 308); and her physical description and biography are deliberately confused with that of the other prostitute, Carmen/Menchu, the 'fulana en el Ritz' (pp. 199-100) (see Labanyi 1989, 156-57; Ruiz Veintemilla 1984, 193-97).

However, viewed through a realist lens, the passage makes clear that the execution squad are, in the final analysis, indifferent as to whether they have got the right man or not (p. 272). The use of focalization and narrative voice are significant in this respect, since both work against any rationalising or heroic view of the militiamen's activities against 'counter-revolutionaries'. The narrative voice is that of the horrified Aurora, whose response to the execution emphasizes the violence of the Patrol's actions, undercutting any ideological justification of them ('todos son iguales cuando empuñan una pistola, crueles y sanguinarios'; 'no era un mal hombre, él y la señora siempre se portaron bien conmigo', p. 272). In addition, the episode is focalized both through her (internally) and (externally) through the victim, described as an old man who accepts his fate with dignity - or disbelief (p. 272). The effect is to reinforce the sense of the arbitrariness of the execution, suggesting that the militiamen have become brutalized by their counter-revolutionary activities.

This impression is reinforced by the reference to the presence of agents of the SIM, the *Servicio de Investigación Militar*. On one level, this seems paradoxical because the SIM was a counter-espionage organisation which, according to Thomas, was primarily set up 'to restrict the activity of "uncontrollables", anarchist or otherwise' and which was eventually dominated by the Communists (Thomas 1986, 776-77). The SIM are also mentioned in *Un día*, in relation to the Fisas (p. 272). The

ghostly presence that cannot be suppressed precisely because it lacks tangible form' (Labanyi 2000, 68). This would certainly be the case with Aurora's memory of the execution of Señor Galán, which she must repress for her own survival but which keeps returning. Labanyi also relates the fragmentary, non-linear oral narratives of popular memory, epitomized by the boys' *aventis*, constructed out scraps of news, hearsay, fictional images etc. as constructing 'a space to let the ghosts of the past in' (ibid). Labanyi's general point is that such filmic allusions symbolize 'the status of history, particularly but not only under censorship, is that of ghost [sic] haunting the present: there but not there' (ibid). Where her argument is particularly useful to my reading of the texts is her notion that there are various attitudes to 'the ghosts of the past'. These range from (i) repression (as in the case of official Francoist historiography); (ii) an obsessive clinging to the past (Freudian 'melancholia'); or, finally (iii) facing up to such ghosts by acknowledging their presence but also recognising them as past (Freudian 'mourning'). One can see this as key to the representation of the *maquis* in the novels, and their dilemma of what relation to adopt to their past political ideals and experience, as discussed further below. In addition, Labanyi points out that, even after the abolition of censorship post-Franco, the period in which most of the novels under discussion are produced, its very name defines it as a historical period 'haunted by a spectral Francoist past' (Labanyi 2000, 69).

representation of the militiamen will be discussed further below in the section on characterization.

Thus in *Si te dicen*, as with *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*, the main time frame for the Civil War references is the early, revolutionary phase of the War. The main events concern the actions of revolutionary groups both during and after the War, and the fascination the *maquis* hold for the adolescent narrators of the novels (see Preston 1986, 185). This is also the case in *Un día* and *El embrujo*. In *Un día*, the protagonist, Jan Julivert Mon, a Republican and later a *maquis*, is based on a real historical figure (Ruiz Veintemilla 1984, 197). He is described as having been imprisoned for participating in ‘aquellos merdés de octubre del 1934’, presumably a reference to the October Revolution when Companys proclaimed a Catalan state (see Thomas 1986, 134-36). He then fought on the Aragón front as part of the Durruti column, and later in Madrid (p. 67). After serving at the front, Suau claims Jan became a policeman, which surprises Sicart - perhaps because the police were Communist-dominated. However, Suau also denies any serious political motivation to Jan’s activities at this point (p. 92).

Again, there is a question mark over Suau’s reliability as a narrator: Polo gives different accounts of the Julivert brothers. His account is described as ‘la versión oficial’ in contrast to Suau’s, reconstructed from ‘el rumor y la maledicencia, con las ruinas de la memoria’. However, the text suggests both versions are unreliable: ‘en la mellada boca de cualquiera de los dos, sin embargo, el asunto era un buen galimatías y siempre sonaba a quincalla, aunque de distinta calidad’ (pp. 92-93; see also Devlin 1984, 34-35). Suau follows his account of Jan’s wartime activities with the story of his father, Sisco Julivert. According to Suau, Sisco was ‘shot’ twice, first by his own side during the purge of the POUM.⁷ Later, during Suau’s account of how Virginia Fisas’s father entrusted his flat to Sisco (pp. 373-74), Sisco is described as a militant in the Estat Català, an extreme separatist group which formed part of the Esquerra (see Thomas 1986, 45; 132; 524-25). This incident highlights the terror experienced during the war by the Catalan bourgeoisie, represented as natural Nationalist sympathisers. However, unlike the narration of the execution of señor Galán in *Si te dicen*, here

7. The image of the dawn execution in *Un día* of course echoes the references to such executions in *Si te dicen*. Thomas says that ‘the most feared checa in Madrid was that known as ‘the dawn patrol’, from the hour at which it carried out its activities’ (Thomas 1986, 275).

Marsé adds a comic touch to the tale of how Fisas reveals his bourgeois origins.⁸ In *El embrujo*, the action takes place in the *posguerra* and contains fewer references to the War. However, there is the same sense that the present lives of the characters are irremediably determined by the recent conflict. Capitán Blay's 'madness' is the result of his memories of the war, in particular the deaths of his sons at the Battle of the Ebro, to the extent that he is still literally reliving the moment of their death (*El embrujo*, p. 27).⁹ In addition, the reader is given some details about the political biographies of El Kim and Nandu Forcat. Again, narratorial unreliability is emphasised in the unstable mental state of capitán Blay, and the fact that different rumours circulate in the *barrio* regarding Kim and the current whereabouts of Forcat (pp. 46 and 21). Both men are described as anarchists, and, moreover, as hopelessly utopian:

cuando estalla el gran merdé y tuturut, todos corriendo a coger el fusil [...] pues que entonces reanuda [El Kim] su amistad con Nandu Forcat y su camarilla de soñadores de paraísos, en el frente de Aragón primero y después aquí en Barcelona, y que esa amistad lo decanta rápidamente hacia la utopía ácrata, hacia ese ideal libertario que había de cambiar el mundo y su propia vida. (pp. 46-47)

Blay's description of Forcat is also heavily tinged with irony (see p. 59), although this may be partly because he is no longer on good terms with the two men. The reason might be a political disagreement, as the above description of Forcat is prefaced by 'un enrevesado preámbulo acerca de las distintas formas de amistad y de rabia que cada guerra genera' (see also p. 47). One can speculate that Blay's political sympathies during the war lay with the 'primacy of war' faction led by the Communists, and that this is an allusion to the divisions on the Left.

Thus to summarise, all three novels focus on the wartime activities, like Simon's texts, but also on the postwar fates of the most revolutionary anti-Francoist groups, particularly the anarchists. Marsé chooses to make his adult protagonists' political sympathies lie with the revolutionary Left (the anarchists and POUM).¹⁰ According to

8. If we compare Fisas asking for a manicure in an anarchist barber's shop with Orwell's use of barber shops while on the run, then the former incident must have occurred before the May 1937 fighting. Suau comments, 'cuanto más guarro iba uno más seguro se sentía', whereas, after the purge, Orwell remarks that the best way to avoid the police was to look 'as bourgeois as possible' (Orwell 1989, 181).

9. Similarly, in *Un día*, Bibiloni continues to re-experience the terrors of the wartime air-raids (p. 83 & pp. 174-75).

10. This is despite of the affiliations of his adoptive father, Pep Marsé, firstly a militant in *Esquerra*

Ruiz Veintemilla, there is an obvious autobiographical reason for this, as the novels are set in the *barrios* of Gracià and el Carmelo, ‘baluartes del anarcosindicalismo durante la guerra civil y en los años que siguieron’ (1984, 197).

On one level, as in Simon’s texts (particularly *Le Palace*), Marsé’s references to the revolutionary Left are generic, in that there is no detailed discussion of their political philosophies or of the ideological differences between them and other Republican groups. On the other hand, the political differences between the various individuals comprising the *maquis* are referred to in concrete terms, and are represented as being of great import. According to Labanyi and Ruiz Veintemilla, the characters in *Si te dicen* and *Un día* are mostly fictional Leftists, but the texts also allude to historical figures (like Nin) and the anarchist guerrillas who continued resisting Franco after the Republican surrender, such as Quico Sabaté and José Lluís Facerías (1989, 138-39 & 1984, 197-98 respectively).

Si te dicen (and to some extent *Un día*) show the guerrilla arguing over strategy and party loyalties. In particular, Palau taunts the others because of their radical anarchist connections, referring to them as ‘faieros’ (pp. 105, 134 and 188). According to Preston, the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* was a ‘secret organisation founded in 1927 to maintain the ideological purity of the [anarchist] movement’ (1996, 34). As opposed to the more reformist CNT, the FAI espoused direct action and revolutionary violence (see also Graham 1999). In *Homage*, Orwell says the term ‘anarchist’ was (mis)used to refer to different shades of opinion, but that even though the CNT-FAI had entered the Popular Front government, the FAI ‘differed fundamentally from the Communists in so much that, like the POUM, they aimed at workers’ control and not a parliamentary democracy’ (1989, 204). Thus rank-and-file members of FAI were ranged alongside the POUM in the May fighting.¹¹

The majority of the *maquis* seemingly belong to one or other of the latter groups. The exchanges between Palau and Bundó and el Fusam (pp. 105-106 and 187-89), along with the allusion to Palau being a member of the SIM (p. 188) and saving priests from execution, imply his sympathies - though no explicit indication is given - lie with

Republicana, who later joined the PSUC. On the other hand, Marsé says the character of the old anarchist Jan Julivert Mon is ‘muy vinculado’ with his father. (Samaniego 1993, 381).

11. Graham, however, points out that the CNT-FAI refused to sanction officially the May fighting, despite calls from the POUM leadership (see 1999, 520-24).

the more centrist Socialists or the Communists.¹² The representation of internal differences among the *maquis* is discussed further in the section on characterization. However, even though the various ideological positions of the different *maquis* are difficult to establish precisely, the concreteness of such references differs fundamentally from Simon's veiled and general allusions. Moreover, their mutual recriminations not only echo the real historical situation, they also individualize and humanize the characters.

In fact, most of the War references in Marsé's novels allude at some point to the governmental chaos and widespread violence caused by its outbreak, and also to abuses perpetrated by the revolutionaries, such as summary executions and church burnings (for instance *Si te dicen*, p. 187). On p. 284, the boys discuss a photo of Marcos posing with his fellow militiamen in a requisitioned luxurious flat (possibly Conrado's):

Sonriéndose burlón en medio del lujo, vengativo, una expresión como si fuera a escupir sobre algo: la gran alfombra, la araña de cristal con cegadores cuellos de cisne o las cortinas color miel, le da lo mismo porque odia por igual todo eso que no es suyo y que no podrá serlo jamás [etc.].¹³

This represents the militiamen in 'sans-culottes' mode, motivated by revenge and class envy. Finally, in all three novels, there are references to the Republican *chekas* described by Thomas (1986, 275-76). The most explicit reference to the *chekas* occurs in *Si te dicen*: according to Aurora/Ramona, the Galán's flat is used by the anarchist militias during the war as a *cheka* (p. 269). During Java's supposed confession to Justiniano in Chapter 19, when he betrays Marcos and Aurora, he describes how Justiniano lost his eye 'en aquel chalet de San Gervasio convertido en *cheka*, cuando lo torturaron por orden de Artemi Nin' (p. 313-14). In fact, Java/Sarnita's version ironizes Justiniano's role as the representative of falangist authority in the *barrio* by implying that he is motivated by a personal desire for revenge in pursuing Aurora/Ramona (and Marcos) as during the war he was subjected to '[u]n juicio sumarísimo y cruel al que Aurora asistió junto con otros anarquistas' (p. 314).

12. On the other hand, he also refers to himself as a revolutionary (p. 189).

13. Labanyi questions the documentary value of the photo, since there is a question mark over its content, setting etc. (1989, 140). She reads the photo of Marcos not as a realist description but as 'an archetypal image of war', used in the same way as the references to Gisbert's painting of Torrijos (see below).

Java/Sarnita hints that the popular view is that Justiniano was caught removing his employers' valuables, not in order to deliver them to the Nationalist zone, like a hero, but to sell them opportunistically. Again, this account must be treated sceptically, being an *aventi* narrated by Sarnita 'reading Java's lips from a distance' (p. 306). However, even if it is not an *aventi*, the account is designed to win Justiniano's favour and so would exaggerate his sufferings at the hands of the reds. Labanyi also points out that the boys' obsession with 'the alleged *chekas* of wartime Republican Barcelona' may reflect the prevalence of such scenes in early Nationalist propaganda (1989, 147-48). It is not just the Republicans in the novel who are represented as using unsavoury methods against their enemies. Palau refers to the postwar rumour that 'la antigua *cheka* de San Gervasio vuelve a funcionar' (p. 318), ironically under the command of Justiniano, victim turned torturer. In Chapter 21, Sarnita's *aventi* about Luisito's visit to the *cheka* condenses various interrogations occurring at different times: Luisito's postwar ordeal merges into the wartime interrogation of Justiniano by Nin, and then switches back to the postwar with the interrogation of Ramón. Labanyi points out that:

The interrogation is recounted at several removes [...] with the result that it is impossible to tell what is embroidery on the part of Sarnita or of Luisito, and what - if anything - took place. The mythical nature of the episode is further highlighted by its description in terms of a horror movie, complete with Gothic castle, dungeons and vampires. (1989, 142; *Si te dicen*, pp. 327 and 330)¹⁴

However, while noting the obviously fantastical or stock horror-film elements, the interrogation of Justiniano also includes historical detail such as the reference to the Nationalist battle cruiser the *Canarias* (pp. 329-30). The description of the prisoners undergoing torture in the chalet is certainly hyperbolic. However, apart from revealing the boys' obsession with such events, its gothic or macabre tone might also be an attempt to convey suffering which was unimaginable or unthinkable to a readership at the very end of the Franco period. Despite the fictional nature of this account, and its use of hyperbolic elements, it can also in this sense function as attempting to convey a heightened sense of realism.

14. Labanyi later sees the references to vampires in the novel as relating to the historical reality of the prevalence of tuberculosis in the *años de hambre*, and as symbolizing the vampirism of the poor by the wealthy. However, she also argues that the vampire motif recurs in situations of historical trauma, highlighting the loss of memory which is characteristic the vampire or 'living dead' figure: 'Luisito is infected [with] the amnesia of the regime, which the boys' stories, keeping

Indeed, the ordeals undergone by the *cheka* prisoners on pp. 328-29 seem less far-fetched in the light of historical accounts of the atrocities committed on both sides during the war (for instance, see Thomas 1986, 272-77). Particularly if one compares Marsé's fictional description to Thomas's matter-of-fact account of conditions in the SIM prisons (1986, 777-78), or Abella's description of the 'caracteres dantescos' of the detention centres operating after Franco's victory (1996, 32-34 and 44-45).¹⁵

In dovetailing the different interrogations in Chapter 21, the text implies a parallel between the barbaric treatment of suspected Republican activists after the war and the treatment of prisoners in Republican *chekas*. Does this suggest Marsé's novelistic discourse is eliding the political differences between Nationalists and Republicans by highlighting the fact that torture and extra-judicial murder were not restricted to one side of the conflict? Moreover, in doing so, is he suggesting, as per the representation of the Civil War in *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*, that such violence is ahistorical, an intrinsic part of the human condition?

The latter question will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Four, and the representation of the two sides in the War is explored further in the section on characterization. However, citing the abuses which took place in Republican prisons in the same sentence as those occurring in Nationalist prisons does not necessarily mean that the text is drawing a universalising parallel between the two sides in the Civil War. In historical terms, as discussed in Chapter One, one must distinguish, firstly, between the eruptions of violence that occurred as revolutionary fervour swept the Republican zone at the beginning of the war, and the systematic violence carried out during the internal Republican purges after May 1937. In turn, the excesses in the Republican zone are distinct from Franco's systematic policy of *limpieza* (both during and after the war), and from his postwar policy of crushing all remaining political opposition.¹⁶ In fact, even the fictional interrogations in *Si te dicen* are not indistinguishable since they contain differentiating time references, for instance the phrase 'no delante y temblando como cinco años ante [etc.] el señor Justiniano'. Secondly, the identity of the various actors is made clear, and specific historical detail included (see pp. 329-30).

the "desaparecidos" alive through narrative, are an attempt to stave off" (2000, 75).

15. See also Chapter II, 31-46.

16. The rape of La Fueguina by 'los moros' alludes to the scorched earth tactics of Franco's Army of Africa (*Si te dicen*, p. 231 & p. 255). See also Thomas (1986, 936) on Franco's policy of

To summarise, this section shows that the focus of the novels on the *posguerra*, particularly the *años de hambre*, does not mean that references to the Civil War are not central, as in Simon's texts, to the hermeneutic, semic and referential aspects of the texts. Secondly, as in Simon's representations of the War, the events depicted concern the early, revolutionary period of the war, particularly in *Si te dicen*. Thirdly, these references focus on Barcelona, and on the most revolutionary elements of the Popular Front.

However, Marsé's is a basically realist discourse which, unlike Simon's, uses explicit historical notations, such as references to real political figures, organisations and events of the period. As discussed below in the section on characterization, the revolutionaries are often represented engaged in arbitrary and violent acts. The focalization of these episodes gives a critical, anti-herioc thrust to their representation, as do the frequent allusions to the theme of fraternal betrayal and to arguments over questions of political principle and strategy both during and after the war. On the other hand, abuses of revolutionary power are juxtaposed in the novels (particularly in *Si te dicen* and *Un día*) with accounts of Nationalist repression, both during and after the war. Significantly, despite the echoes of bitter Republican divisions evoked by the name of Aurora's anarchist uncle, Artemi Nin, in *Si te dicen* this character does not die an untimely death at the hands of Communist agents, but is executed as part of the postwar repression.¹⁷ Moreover, despite textual allusions to the ideological divisions among the Republican Left and the *maquis*, the texts include no detailed substantive discussion of the various ideological differences and distinctions between the various Left groups.

The Treatment of Time

There is little obvious comparison between the treatment of narrative time in Simon's texts and the treatment of time in Marsé's texts, given the realist notations of period referred to above. However, Marsé also ascribes much importance to memory, both individual and cultural, and the formal correlative of this theme is his use of analepsis

'limpieza'.

17. The historical Nin was tortured and murdered by NKVD agents after the communist purge of the POUM. His death was covered up not by the Nationalists, but by those who were supposedly fighting for the same cause (see Preston 1996, 188; Labanyi 1989, 138-39; Graham 1999, 529).

and prolepsis. *Si te dicen* contains the most experimental structuring of narrative time and some of the techniques used by Marsé can be most fruitfully compared to the techniques used in Simon's novels, principally in the way he represents present experience as merging with remembered experience. Chapter 4 will examine whether, as in Simon's texts, the form which narrative time takes in Marsé's novels is rooted in or conveys a more abstract vision of historical processes.

In general terms, critics such as Sherzer claim that the treatment of time in Marsé's novels up to *La muchacha* follows his stylistic trajectory. It moves from 'traditional objectivity' in the early novels (*Encerrados*) to 'subjectivism' (*Últimas tardes* and *La oscura historia de la prima Montse*) and then to 'experimental objectivism' in *Si te dicen* (Sherzer 1982, 101). However, he comments that throughout Marsé's novelistic production 'Marsé usa su tiempo como lo necesite, así que en *Encerrados* y *Últimas tardes* hay grandes lapsus de tiempos sin que el lector tenga que preocuparse por lo que pueda haber pasado en esos lapsus' (1982, 103). Sherzer asserts that this 'narrative liberty' regarding time has more to do with thematics and plot than with formal concerns. For instance, in *Últimas tardes*, the reversal of the chronological order of scenes is one more technique, apart from direct authorial comments, which is used to convey the novel's sharply critical social vision.¹⁸ According to Sherzer, it is only *Si te dicen* that breaks with 'unos preceptos tradicionales muy del siglo XIX' (1982, 168).

Thus, to build on Sherzer's point, the kind of *formally* complex or experimental treatment of narrative time found in Simon's novels, particularly *Le Palace*, is really only found in *Si te dicen*. Briefly, on a macro-level, there are the shifts within the narrative between the events of the pre-civil war period, the War itself, the 1940s and the 1970s and, on a micro-level, there are shifts in narrative tenses within the relation of a single episode.¹⁹ This blurring of time references is one way in which the novel destabilizes any division of the elements of the narrative sequence into 'fact' and 'fiction'.

According to Champeau, the indeterminacy and confusion on the temporal level of the narrative means that the reader's attention is drawn to the story itself, to its lack

18. Sherzer discusses in particular the use of interior monologues in *Últimas tardes con Teresa* to comment both on past events and anticipate future ones (1982, 103-105, & 76).

19. For examples of (i), see Nito watching *Ironsides* in the hospital bar (*Si te dicen*, pp. 139-40); and for an example of (ii), see Java's meeting with the owner of the Bar Continental (*Si te dicen*,

of conventional chronology and its internal logic. This both creates an sense of ‘time’ where there is no change and suggests that chronological links are not the most significant forms of logical connection:

L’absence ou insuffisance des repères temporels contribue à donner l’impression qu’il n’y a pas de temps. Celle-ci est accentuée par la fréquente utilisation de phrases nominales et du gérondif (mode qui n’est personnel ni temporel, n’est pas engagé dans un mouvement de réalisation, de sorte qu’on le qualifie de “forme nominale du verbe”) et du participe passé. (1983, 365)

This ‘absence de temps’ is also reinforced, according to Champeau, by the fact that the narrative contains numerous analepses but few prolepses. The latter refer only to negative events such as the death of Carmen/Menchu and the ageing of Conrado, giving the impression of a closed future, in which events and outcomes are already decided. She also cites the description of the Javaloyes’s calendar. This repeats ‘la misma fecha día tras día’ and records ‘un tiempo que no fluía desde el pasado sino desde el futuro, un tiempo sepulcral que [Marcos] veía venir y echársele encima como una losa de silencio’ (*Si te dicen*, p. 310).

The overall effect created by the blurring of different time periods in *Si te dicen* can be compared to that produced by Simon’s texts, particularly *Le Palace*. As in Simon’s texts, there is a merging of past memories and present experience (this occurs particularly in relation to Sarnita). Moreover, a sense of an eternal present is created, which could connote the narrator’s failure to exorcise the past, and the stasis and lack of progress of an *infernal* space. On a micro-level, the two texts have similar syntactic structures: *Le Palace* uses the present participle where *Si te dicen* uses the gerund form.

However, Chapter 4 argues that the notion of an eternal, infernal space must ultimately be contextualised in terms of the particular historical period that the novel is describing.

The treatment of narrative time in *Un día*, and *El embrujo* in particular, is essentially realist in the sense described by Barthes in *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture*. For instance, we are given clear time references either to the Civil War or postwar period, either via precise dates or because the approximate time period is easy to infer from textual references to famous historical events.²⁰ For instance, there are references to events of the Civil War and to Klein’s activities as a judge from 1945-47 in *Un día*,

pp. 63-64). See also Amell 1984, 116-22.

20. For examples of the former, see *Un día*, p. 15, p. 59, p. 90, p. 91, p. 369, and *El embrujo*, p.

and allusions to the Battle of Ebro, the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the Chinese Revolution in *El embrujo*. *Si te dicen* also contains frequent references to historical events (such as the end of World War Two), but again the deliberate confusion of time periods make us unsure what status these allusions have. Nevertheless, several critics, including Amell, read the novel's temporal confusion either as a mimetic device or a technical problem of the novel's 'epic sweep' (1984, 136).

The main time frame of *Un día* is clear from its intra-textual references: Jan returns to the *barrio* after spending '[t]rece años menos cuatro meses' in prison (p. 14), and the (unidentified) narrator first hears of Jan in 1951, when 'el pistolero ya debía llevar cuatro o cinco años preso' (p. 16). At the end of the novel, Jan is buried on 17 November 1959.²¹ *El embrujo* and *Si te dicen* are set about ten years earlier, during the 'años de hambre'. In *El embrujo*, we are given the specific date February 1951, and told that this is three years after Dani's last visit to the tower (p. 184): thus the main story takes place in 1947-48.²² *El embrujo* has a similar narrative structure to *Un día* - an essentially linear structure with flashbacks or interpolated memories (Amell 1984, 142) and it also has the added interpolation of Forcat's fantastical account of Jan's adventures in Shanghai. These are described as happening just prior to, or contemporaneously with, events in Barcelona (see for instance p. 60).

Both analepsis and prolepsis are important in the two novels: both are fundamental elements of the structuring of narrative time also found in the more experimental *Si te dicen*. What is the effect of using such techniques on the semantic level, that is, how does it affect the representation of the Civil War? In general terms, Marsé has described how his narratives switch between - and in some cases blur - different time periods (Samaniego 1993, 387). However, unlike Simon's texts, in *Un día* and *El embrujo* the present perceptions and actions of Marsé's protagonists are not represented phenomenologically. That is, time is not represented as a series of unconnected, monadic moments but, to varying degrees, the characters' actions are seen as part of a causal chain, as the inevitable and inescapable consequence of past actions and beliefs. In addition, thematically, it is not just the adult focalizers of the

47, p. 135, p. 143, p. 152, p. 184.

21. According to Amell, Marsé first describes the character of Jan in a 1976 article in *Señoras y señores*, giving the date of the novel as 1959 (1984, 136).

22. The Dani character is thus a similar age to the real-life Marsé, who says he began work at

texts but also the younger generation whose lives are seen as determined by the traumatic events of the past, the Civil War which they did not directly experience. This is significant not just in terms of any discussion of the texts' ideological perspective on the war, but also because it means *both* sets of focalizers have, for different reasons, a nostalgic relation to the past, a sense that the present is lacking in some way.

This theme is not represented as the product of a particular historical conjuncture. Marsé has commented that he believes 'childhood is paradise and the seat of our true selves' and that as adults 'we are just like the living dead' (Gazarian-Gautier 1991, 172). This view of childhood is represented in his fiction in the way in which the unidentified narrator of *Un día* and, in particular, Dani in *El embrujo*, recount their adolescent experiences retrospectively from an adult perspective. Childhood is represented as an apparently endless series of imaginative possibilities, despite the material hardships of the postwar period.

In *Un día*, there are explicit references to the fact that this is a retrospective account (pp. 15-16 and p. 387), and the novel ends in 1975 with an episode involving the now-adult narrator and his young son (pp. 392-94). The narrator's nostalgia establishes a certain relation between 'fantasy' and 'reality'. Not only is the narrator nostalgic for his childhood capacity for fantasy, embodied in the telling of *aventis*, and for the excitement this generates, it is also suggested (pp. 16-18) that these fictional constructs offer a more cogent and lucid view of postwar reality.

The theme of nostalgia for a golden age of childhood, and in particular for the child's open-ended sense of the future is also present in *El embrujo*, as is made clear in the epigraph. At the end of the novel, the adult Dani realises that his desire to break with his past, and leave the *barrio*, is mere wishful thinking: 'a pesar de crecer y por mucho que uno mire hacia el futuro, uno crece siempre hacia el pasado, en busca tal vez del primer deslumbramiento' (p. 190). This leads to his abortive attempt to see Susana (taking place in the cine Mundial, another site of childhood fantasies) and to discover the truth behind the rumours: predictably, the adult Susana turns out to be a poor relation of the adolescent Susana of memory/imagination (p. 191).

However, interestingly, the adult Dani is acutely aware of the fantasy nature of the world which he and Susana inhabited in the tower, as is shown by his (retrospectively) disabused take on the adolescent Susana, and what he imagines about

the adult Susana:

una niña ovillada en su costumbre de lejanías y de mentiras, soñadora y confiada en su cálido refugio de cristal, en su pequeña burbuja afortunada [...] [Susana] ni siquiera parecía consciente de estar allí metida, tan abstraída de todo y acaso todavía ensimismada en la difícil renuncia de lo que debía haber sucedido hace tiempo y no sucedió nunca. Cuántas veces no habré pensado en la naturaleza desválida de sus recuerdos como si fuese un reflejo de la mía igualmente desválida. (p. 191)

Describing Dani and Susana's memories as 'desvalida' suggests that they are, in fact, not 'real' but the products of a fantasy view of life - of the kind of *folletinesco* discourse which informs Forcat's Shanghai story. This connection is made explicit by Dani's comparison of his position to that of the fictional Kim. However, the end of the novel is more ambivalent than this reading suggests, since it reinstates the power of this fantasy discourse and accords it a positive value. Despite Dani's adult scepticism or reality principle, he recognises the powerful hold that the fictional images of the Shanghai story have on his imagination and his memory:

Durante un buen rato no me enteré de qué iba en la pantalla. Lo que veía desfilar ante mis ojos una y otra vez era una sola imagen que parpadeaba congelada y silente como si se hubiese atascado en el proyector, una reflexión de la luz más ilusoria que la de una película pero grabada en el corazón con más fuerza que en la retina del ojo, y que ha de acompañarme para siempre: un paquebote blanco [...] Susana dejándose llevar en su sueño y en mi recuerdo a pesar del desencanto, las perversiones del ideal y el tiempo transcurrido, hoy como ayer, rumbo a Shanghai. (p. 192)

This image of adventure and love on the high seas is an archetypal image of freedom, adventure and the fulfilment of romantic desire. It is also explicitly cinematographic. By locating this scene in a cinema, and by explicitly describing Dani's memory in terms of a filmic image, Marsé's text, like Simon's, consciously foregrounds its fictionality and the complex layers of mediation it involves. More specifically, it highlights the highly romanticised, if not clichéd, conventions of the Hollywood 'B' movie from which it derives, just as Simon highlights the clichés of a particular revolutionary discourse in describing the photograph of the militia train. However, in Marsé's text this vision, despite the awareness of its constructed and clichéd nature, remains invested with the character's desire.

The section on characterization considers the use of visual images in Marsé's

texts in terms of how they make the reader more aware of cultural and ideological mediations in both individual and collective representations of the past. It also asks whether the self-conscious manipulation of images - particularly of the stock images of popular culture - in Marsé's texts is used in a more directed way to debunk a particular, mythifying discourse of revolutionary heroism (as suggested by Labanyi 1989 and Devlin 1991, and as occurs in Simon's texts). The theme of nostalgia, also, however, has a political dimension, in that the adult characters in the novels, in particular the *maquis*, can be described as having a nostalgic relation to past experience. Arguably, 'nostalgia' in the sense of the character regarding the past as a lost golden age, only really applies to the character of Kim, whose nostalgia could be simply the product of Forcat's imagination. However, the *maquis* in *Si te dicen* and *Un día*, in their refusal or inability to face the fact of the Republican defeat and the political reality of Franco's victory, cling to past experience. While Jan is willing to renounce the latter, he is still unable to renounce the memory of his former relationship with Klein.

In *Un día*, the novel's irony turns on the gap between Jan's mythical status as a 'pistolero' in the *barrio*, whose inhabitants invest him with their repressed desires for revenge on the representatives of the regime (Folch, pp. 57-59; Raich, p. 82), and the reality of the released Jan's inaction. Jan is indifferent to events in the *barrio* (see p. 82; p. 107), and refuses to participate in the subversive activities of his former comrades (see pp. 243-45 and pp. 332-43). Both the description of Jan on p. 170, and the account of his meeting with Raich (pp. 171-74) are good examples of how the adolescents in particular project a hidden, symbolic meaning onto Jan's actions. Yet, at the same time, the novel maintains suspense because its full irony functions only retrospectively.

Firstly, the description of Jan's physical appearance makes it clear that the notion that he is consumed by an inner fury, or that his inaction is merely a clever ruse designed to lull suspicions while he prepares some future revenge, as Nestor believes, is a fantasy projection. Secondly, there is the general use of proleptic references, in this instance the phrase 'los acontecimientos no se hicieron esperar, si bien no acabarían de encajar en nuestros cálculos [etc.]' (p. 172; see also p. 380). Both these techniques, by making the reader aware that the focalization occurs largely through the adolescents, remind her that their account of Jan's state of mind and motivations is unreliable.

On the other hand, ambiguity over the meaning of Jan's motives and actions is fostered by describing incidents such as the Reich encounter from the perspective of an outside observer, giving the reader no further information. The most significant examples of this are, firstly, Polo's death (p. 173), where the narrator suggests his death was a murder. Polo is well known in the *barrio* for his brutality and was involved in the interrogation of Balbina on the night of Jan's arrest, and in her subsequent torture (see p. 25, p. 29, p. 67). Later in the novel, we learn that Polo stood in the way of Jan getting the job as security guard for the Kleins (p. 181). However, during the discussion in the bar on p.173, the neighbours speculate that his death was suicide, and this is the official verdict (p. 181).

In an interview, Marsé says that Jan murders Polo, not out of revenge but to secure the job: however, the elaboration of the novel is obviously at an early stage here, since Marsé refers to Jan confronting Polo, incidents which are omitted from the 1982 edition. Marsé also confirms that the story is focalized through an external viewpoint which erroneously attributes motives of revenge to Jan: 'Quiero hacer algo parecido a la novela negra, una serie de hechos violentos vistos desde una perspectiva que presupone una finalidad vengativa en el ex-pistolero, pero no es así' (Sinnigen 1979, 122).

Secondly, the main enigma of the novel involves Jan's motivations for taking the job as security guard. El Mandalay (pp. 202-04) and the *maquis* (pp. 243-45) speculate on this, but the real reason - his love for Klein - is revealed only in the conversation between Suau and Balbina (pp. 370-78) at the end of the novel, an account which also explains Jan's behaviour during the robbery. However, we are still reminded of the tentativeness of this reconstruction (p. 371). The fact that Suau's authority as a storyteller is questioned earlier in the novel makes this account of Jan's relationship with Klein more doubtful

However, the novel does indicate on several occasions that the answer to the enigma of Jan's behaviour is his homosexuality. All the signs, however, function ironically only in retrospect: firstly there is the hair clip/tie pin, which can be read as connoting the disturbance or transgression of conventional gender divisions (see pp. 149; 220; 267). Other clues are the references to Jan's fastidiousness (pp.170 and 290) and his fondness for the conventionally feminine pastime of knitting (pp. 172; 217; 339). Finally, Balbina asserts that there were never any women in Jan's life (p. 149)

and Klein addresses Jan as ‘Mellors’ (pp. 312, 313 and 314). On a first reading, this allusion to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* reads as a somewhat snide reminder of the class difference between Jan and his employer. With hindsight, it has greater resonance, connoting a taboo-breaking love affair across the classes. As such, it is emblematic of the way the novel also complicates and blurs the hermeneutic code by suggesting that Jan’s motives in taking the job are sentimental, but then playing on the reader’s conventional expectation that the love-object can only be Virginia, not her husband (see for instance pp. 119, 148-50 and 204-05).²³ Finally, before exploring another effect of the partial retrospection of the narration, there is also internal focalization through Jan, giving the reader some insight into his feelings. The theme of Jan’s disillusionment with his former political ideals is explored more fully in the section on characterization.

The final question is whether the retrospective nature of both novels, and in particular their use of analepsis and prolepsis, works against a realist linear notion of causality. That is, does the reader have a sense that events in the lives of Jan and El Kim are always already played out, as in Simon’s texts? It can be argued that in Marsé, the use of analepsis and prolepsis remains within a classical realist framework because the retrospective nature of the narrative is clearly signalled, and thus linear chronology and causal links are maintained.

The Representation of Barcelona

Unlike Simon’s archetypal treatment of setting, topography is everything in Marsé’s novels, as Marsé himself recognises: ‘Yo escribo sobre este mundo, sobre este país, incluso podría decir sobre determinado *barrio* y determinadas calles’ (in Amell 1984, 16). With the exception of *La muchacha*, his novels are set mainly in Barcelona and, in the case of the so-called ‘trilogy’, in an even more confined geographical location: the *barrios* of Gracià, el Carmelo and el Guinardó. The same streets, the same buildings and reference points recur in *Si te dicen* and *Un día*. For instance, the *Casa de familia* in the Calle Verdi, the parish church of Las Ánimas, the wasteland in the Calle Cerdeña, the *Comisaría*, the Rovira cinema (see Amell 1984, 142 and 150-51

23. Indeed, it seems that Marsé at first intended this more conventional dénouement (Sinnigen 1979, 122).

and Sherzer 1982, 62). Many of these places also recur in *El embrujo* (for instance see p. 29).

The negative representation of Barcelona in the early War period in Simon's texts is transferred in Marsé onto the postwar city. As in Simon's revolutionary city, the action in *Si te dicen* takes place largely in subterranean and nocturnal locations, and the city is peopled by ghosts and doubles (1983, 361-63; see also Labanyi 1989, 165-68). In *El embrujo*, too, Barcelona is referred to as 'la ciudad de los muertos' and Forcat - and by implication the other 'vencidos' - are also described as living ghosts (p. 123). In *Si te dicen*, Champeau identifies the use of both the Christian doctrine of the Fall (as alluded to in the title) and the classical motif of a descent into hell (as in the myth of Orpheus's descent into the Underworld, a constant intertext in Simon's writing). She sees the repeated allusions to fire, and to the 'medieval bestiary' of rats, spiders, birds of prey, and termites which people the novel, as a further illustration of the infernal character of the city (1983, 367-68). In addition, there are omnipresent references to: '[b]oue, ordures, crasse, vomissements, pourriture' (1983, 362, n. 3); images of physical decay and corruption. Labanyi also notes the prevalence of images of disease and dirt in the descriptions of the *barrio* (1989, 171).²⁴

Champeau sees the referential status of the description of certain locations in *Si te dicen* as undermined by the repetition of the elements contained within them. In particular, she cites the way in which objects from Conrado's flat in the calle Mallorca reappear in scenes in the crypt where the children rehearse their religious play, in the 'torture' of the orphan girls, and in the bishop's palace (Champeau 1983, 362-63). This gives the reader the sense that these different locations are interconnected and, moreover, that they constitute 'un espace labyrinthique, un espace clos [...] un espace infernal' (ibid). Indeed, Champeau makes a direct comparison between the depiction of postwar Barcelona as 'l'enfer' in *Si te dicen* - and, it could be added, with less intensity, in *El embrujo* - and Simon's depictions of the city in *Les Géorgiques* - and, by extension, *Le Palace* (1983, 362, n. 3).

The use of images of hell and of bodily corruption can be seen as intensifying the pessimism of Marsé's discourse. As in Simon's texts, the reader is faced with a vision of the inhabitants of Barcelona as imprisoned in a static, doomed world which

24. In her 2000 article, Labanyi also interprets such images of hell and rubbish as 'a metaphorical figure of the consignment of history's losers to the "dustbin of history" which at the same time is a "historical hell" inhabited by the living dead.' (2000, 74).

Amell describes as ‘un mundo completamente cerrado que no tiene salida’ (1984, 132). However, unlike in Simon’s texts, the representation of Barcelona as a hell, including the use of the image of the fall, has a more positive, contestatory charge, since it forms an integral part of the novel’s social critique of Francoism:

Evoquer l’Espagne franquiste comme un enfer, alors que son régime se proclamait le défenseur des valeurs occidentales et chrétiennes, le champion de la Foi contre Satan et ses œuvres dans le monde contemporain, c’est retourner contre lui un élément de la culture dominante profondément imprégnée de christianisme, renverser la situation, inverser les signes. (Champeau 1983, 368; see also Labanyi 1989, 137)

However, Marsé’s depiction of Barcelona in *Si te dicen* (and, to a much lesser extent, in *El embrujo*) as a ‘hell’ can equally be read as a realist ‘reflection’ (in the ‘harshest, most sordid and sinister form possible’, Amell 1984, 110) of the reality of the *años de hambre* for the inhabitants of one working-class *barrio*. The setting of the novels above all reflects a real social landscape: for instance, Susana’s tuberculosis and the pestilent smoke spewed out by the factory may be metaphors for the social breakdown of this period but can also function as realist notations. The depiction of Barcelona contains numerous instances of what Abella defines as ‘las plagas de una posguerra [...] hambre, enfermedad, abandono, prostitución’ (Abella 1984, 82).²⁵ Without attempting an all-inclusive list, the terrible hunger suffered by the population is alluded to, for instance, in the description of Ramona (pp. 67-68) and in the fact that all the cats have disappeared (p. 59). It is also explicitly mentioned by Sor Paulina looking back in the seventies (p. 80). There are allusions to the strict rationing (introduced by the regime in January 1940 and lasting until 1952) and to widespread practice of ‘el estraperlo’ that developed as a consequence (see Abella 1984, 65-69), for instance in the description of women queueing (*Si te dicen*, p. 64) and when the *dueña* of the Continental appears hiding a loaf of blackmarket bread (p. 60). Along with the rise (and fall) of those who grow rich from black-market trading such as the baronesa (see pp. 186; 190-91 and 248-49), and the ‘estraperlista gordo’ (p. 164), the novel shows the exploitation of the desperate women who act as the carriers of illicit goods, such as Sarnita’s mother (pp. 58-59) and Petra (pp. 190-91).

25. Read in tandem with *Si te dicen*, Abella’s historical account of life in the Spain of the forties, especially Chapters I to VII, shows just how accurate a reconstruction of this period the novel is. See also Ruiz Veintemilla 1984.

Malnutrition led to the increase among the majority of Spaniards who could not afford to buy goods on the black market of all kinds of disease ('las manifestaciones clínicas de tipo carencial [...] hasta llegar a los espectaculares y patéticos edemas que hinchaban el abdomen y las extremidades' (Abella 1984, 67). This combined with insanitary living conditions created a favourable climate for the spread of epidemics such as diphtheria, malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis (Abella 1984, 67-70). In his prologue to the *Cátedra* edition, Sherzer comments on the way all the characters in the novel are defined by 'una anormalidad o característica especial: pelo rubio, sarna, tuberculosis, espalda jorobada, etc.' Apart from helping the reader to distinguish the different characters, this also functions symbolically as part of the novel's social critique, by reducing complex individuals to a single physical trait and thus dehumanising them: '[e]n la negación de la personalidad se ve reflejada la impersonalidad y brutalidad de la guerra y sus consecuencias' (Sherzer 1985, 44).²⁶

However, these characteristics are also realist notations reflecting a period in which: '[e]l abandono, la suciedad determinada por la escasez de detergente, descubría un estado sanitario lamentable en el que la sarna, la tiña y la piodermatitis se cebaron sobre las clases humildes' (Abella 1984, 71). In *Si te dicen*, there are numerous allusions to such low-grade infections and to more serious conditions such as tuberculosis, for instance, in the descriptions of the 'kabileños' (Sarnita p. 81; Luis p. 89). The 'kabileños' are represented as roaming the ruined cityscape unsupervised 'incontrolados, sin colegio [...] peor que la peste, embusteros como el demonio' (p. 80). This description by Sor Paulina is obviously coloured retrospectively by her social status as a nun: in fact, most of the mischief the boys get up to is relatively harmless.

Their fondness for *aventis* and the 'funciones' they perform with the orphan girls can also be read as showing their resourcefulness in managing to invent their own 'juegos baratos', as the adult Sarnita argues (p. 81). The Chacón brothers in *El embrujo* ('dos charnegos analfabetos y piojosos', p. 23) are portrayed as equally resilient: like Sarnita, they have a stall selling second-hand comics and pulp novels, and they resort to trickery to get food (see for instance pp. 11 and 21-23). However, some of the boys' entrepreneurial activities have more serious consequences. The involvement of Mingo in his father's (Palau's) robberies ends with his being sent to a reformatory (*Si te dicen*

26. See also Fiddian and Evans 1988, 50. Having archetypal characters recognisable by a single trait could equally be a function of an oral narrative, as discussed by Labanyi (1989, 150-52).

pp. 129-30; 136-37 and 351).

The representation of the 'kabileños' denotes that substantial minority of working-class children in 'los años de hambre' whose lives were characterised by severe material and emotional deprivation (see Abella 1984, 41-42) because one or both parents had been killed or imprisoned. This is also true of the orphan girls: Juanita gives an intimation of the austere conditions they have to endure on pp. 92-93. Her chilling comment that her father was shot by the Nationalists, 'pero se lo tenía merecido' (p. 92), also shows how the children have internalised the all-pervasive Nationalist propaganda of 'las dos Españas'. Central to this was the notion that there could be no forgiveness for the defeated (see *Si te dicen*, p. 249 and Abella 1984, 17).

The other social scourge which the novel represents in detail is 'la miseria moral', and the clearest symptom of this is the numerous references to prostitution. As is discussed below in the section on characterization, the fact that the protagonists of the novel are prostitutes symbolizes the generalised corruption of social relations under Franco (Labanyi 1989, 173-77). More specifically, through her social ascent Carmen is emblematic - as is Java, the male prostitute - of the corruption among the highest levels of the Francoist elite (see also Ruiz Veintemilla on the mixture of realist notation and symbolism in the description of Carmen's connections, 1984, 197). According to Champeau '[l]a dégradation, avec toutes ses variantes (prostitution, perversion, humiliation, corruption)' is the principle semantic axis of the text (Champeau 1983, 374).²⁷

However, the allusions to prostitution are also realist notations: Abella comments on the economic causes for the massive increase in prostitution, and on the hypocrisy of the official policy of allowing some legalized prostitution in the form of brothels (1984, 73-74). Indeed, *Si te dicen* represents the full range of types of the prostitute, from Luisito's mother, who supposedly works as a 'pajillera' to make ends meet while her husband is in prison (see pp. 202 and 212-13), through Ramona/Aurora right up to the 'puta de lujo', Menchu/Carmen.

Official corruption in the novel is represented principally by the figure of the crippled war hero Conrado, depicted as a sexual pervert and a hypocrite (see Sherzer 1982, 217), discussed further below. Conrado's disability can be read as an allusion to Franco, who suffered from Parkinson's disease: according to Labanyi it was this

27. Mangini González links the 'degradación social' of the novel to the preference in the

allusion specifically which led to the banning of the original edition (1989, 137). The other equally unsavoury figure representing Falangist officialdom is Justiniano (see for instance, the description of his activities of bribe-taking and intimidation on p.166; plus Sarnita's sardonic account of his zeal in constructing 'la patria amanecida', p. 278). Finally, the *aventi* of Java's meeting with the Bishop of Barcelona reveals the Catholic church hierarchy which supported the regime as morally bankrupt (see pp. 143-47; see also Labanyi 1989, 153).

The desolation of the social landscape echoes and is reinforced by the description of the physical destruction and abandonment of the *barrio* in both *Si te dicen* and *El embrujo*:

Peatones malafeitados y de mirar torcido surgían de las esquinas igual que apariciones y se alejaban arrimados a la pared como buscando un hueco donde ocultarse, una grieta, como si las calles se amenazaran en convertirse en una riada. Tras las acacias deshojadas se alzaban fantasmas de edificios en ruinas. Balcones descarnados mostraban los hierros retorcidos, rojizos de herrumbre, y ventanas como bocas melladas bostezaban al vacío. (*Si te dicen*, p. 64)

The waste ground where the boys carry out their interrogation of the girls is likened to a post-apocalyptic landscape (see p. 87). In *El embrujo* too, the external vision of the 'macilenta y tranquila' plaza Rovira is explicitly linked to Forcat's internal vista of 'la derrota de su vida' (p. 20). However, it should be reiterated here that although the description of the devastated Barcelona in the 1993 text contains the same elements as the text of two decades earlier, *Si te dicen*, its overall tone is lighter and less bleak.

Similarly, in relation to *Un día*, Amell asserts that the tone of fatalistic anger found in *Si te dicen* becomes one merely of resignation or fatalism in the later novel (1984, 142), doubtless due partly to the fact that, by the early eighties, Francoism had finally been consigned to history. Set at the end of the fifties, the Barcelona of *Un día* lacks the descriptions of chronic misery, hunger, disease and political repression that are central to *Si te dicen*. However, the text also contains flashbacks to the 'años de hambre', and the motif of prostitution is still present in the figure of Balbina, who begins her career as a 'pajillera' in the Roxy. Doctor Cabot (pp. 278-82) emphasises that Balbina resorts to this way of life out of economic necessity. While material

picaresque genre for delinquent characters and settings and for social critique (1985, 75).

circumstances may have improved for the inhabitants of the *barrio* over the two decades since the end of the War, in moral and political terms, fatalism and hypocrisy appear to have become entrenched and institutionalised in Spanish society. This is shown by the mood in the *barrio* before Jan's return, and by the story of El Mandalay's business deals involving corrupt regime officials (see pp. 207-208; pp. 264-65; pp. 359-60).

Urban geography in *Un día* is also used to symbolize social and political barriers. Gilabert argues that the depiction of place in the novel has an inescapably critical function: 'la descripción física de la ciudad dramatiza la irreconciliabilidad del ser humano sumergido en el caos de una sociedad de consumo deshumanizada y deshumanizante' (1985, 100). According to Gilabert, El Mandalay's social ascent is expressed in geographical terms. He moves from the 'barrios obreros' (Can Tunis, La Torrassa and Hospitalet) to the 'barrios burgueses' (Tibidabo, Bonanova, San Gervasio or Ensanche) inhabited by the Francoist elite who are involved in the exploitation of the working class population of areas like the Zona Franca (where Klein's company is involved in the expropriation of land, p. 261). However, Mandalay's ascent reveals the hollowness of individual social advancement: 'hay, ahora, libertad de cambiar de barrio, pero los barrios siguen siendo y significando lo mismo' (1985, 101).

In other words, the novel uses movement between different *barrios* to denounce the myth of a new social mobility afforded by the economic boom occurring in this period, and which was embodied, above all, by the explosion in the construction industry and speculation over real estate (see Abella 1984, 200). As Gilabert points out, the Barcelona of the impending boom years remains a divided city in class terms: 'Los Klein y compañía están ya en plena decadencia, pero vendrán otros como el Mandalay perpetuando el fraccionamiento social de la ciudad' (1985, 101).

Characterisation

This section will consider the representation of the main protagonists in the novels, the 'vencidos', and also Marsé's portrayal of the 'vencedores'. Before proceeding, however, it must be noted again that *Si te dicen* is the most difficult novel to analyse in terms of character and narrative focalization because it deliberately blurs the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction'. One effect of this is that it is difficult to

establish a *precise* narrative viewpoint through which the reader can understand the action (see Culler 1975, 147).

However, leaving aside the particular complexity of *Si te dicen*, Marsé's novelistic world is also a 'mundo cerrado' when it comes to characterization (Marsé in Samaniego 1993, 386). Often a character from one novel reappears in a later text (the prime example is Manolo in *Últimas tardes* and *La oscura historia*, but in *Un día*, for instance, the *maquis* El Taylor and Palau from *Si te dicen* reappear, see p. 122 and p. 146). Characters from different novels are also given the same name (Balbina is the name of a prostitute in *Si te dicen* and *Un día*) or have the same profession, class background and, again, geographical location (see Amell 1984, 137-38; Sherzer 1982, 61; and Marsé in Samaniego 1993, 386).²⁸

All the characters are all delineated by means of conventional physical and psychological description. Thus in all the novels, and in *Si te dicen* in particular, they can be called 'archetypal'. However, this is not in the sense of Simon's representation of the inhabitants of Barcelona as 'types', that is, as de-individuated and, moreover, passive victims of historical events, rather than active participants in their making. The kind of typification used by Marsé in the novel resembles more Lukács's 'particularistic' notion of the type as a character who crystallises essential features of the social process. This is the case even in *Si te dicen*, where, for instance, the identity of Carmen-Menchu, the 'fulana de lujo', is difficult to distinguish from that of Aurora/Ramona because the same semes are associated with both (notably the turban and the gold scorpion).²⁹

According to Ruiz Veintemilla, this deliberate blurring of identities implies that Aurora/Ramona and Menchu/Carmen are two sides of the same figure. That is, she represents 'la mujer prostituida por la guerra y la posguerra, operando a dos niveles distintos: el mundo del dinero y del poder (Carmen) y el mundo de la miseria y los derrotados (Aurora)' (1984, 193). For Labanyi, the blurring of identities, and of fact and fiction, shows that prostitution does not simply function as a metaphor for the generalised collapse of individual and social morality. Apart from being an archetypal

28. According to Sherzer, this is one strand of the repetition which takes place on all levels of the narratives: 'encontramos continuous usos de las mismas palabras, frases, imágenes y temas. A través de la intertextualidad y la intratextualidad, [Marsé] traza una compleja telaraña de "enunciados", todos interrelacionados' (1982, 59).

29. For a detailed discussion, see Ruiz Veintemilla 1986, 193-96; Gould Levine 1979, 316-21 and Garvey 1980, 381-83

representation of the prostitute, Carmen/Menchu is a composite figure who shows how the official (mythical) version of the life of Carmen Broto is subverted by a popular (mythical) version (Labanyi 1989, 166-67, n. 34). The numerous references to seduction, perversion and pornography in the text, and the fact that the protagonists of the novel are 'prostitutes and voyeurs' function on a meta-fictional level to foreground processes of narration and representation (1989, 173).

It is true that the novel self-consciously refers to the archetypal aspects of its representation of prostitution, for instance when Java/Sarnita give two opposing versions of the prostitute's life (see pp. 199-200), explicitly presenting these portraits as the product of different narrative conventions. For example, as Labanyi says, Carmen/Menchu the 'fulana de lujo' is represented as 'the archetypal Hollywood temptress' (1989, 148). This self-conscious use of representation is explored further in Chapter 4, but this section reads such references principally as both referential notations and as symbols of the postwar collapse of values. In fact, many of the details given about Carmen-Menchu in the novel are taken from the life of the real prostitute Carmen Broto, murdered in January 1949 near Marsé's house (see Ruiz Veintemilla 1984, 196-97). According to Marsé, his memory of witnessing the discovery of her corpse was the visual catalyst for the novel (Samaniego 1993, 376).

In Marsé's novels, the main characters and focalizers are always either Republicans ('los vencidos') or their children ('los hijos de la derrota'). Although 'bourgeois' characters appear in Marsé's writing (Amell 1984, 136), in the three novels under discussion they are represented as secondary characters (despite the important roles, in dialectical terms, played by Conrado in *Si te dicen* and Klein in *Un día*) - and the action is never recounted from their viewpoint. La Fueguiña gives us an insight into the life of Conrado (pp. 226-32) but this is focalized through the girl and/or the boys ('procura meterte en la piel de la Fueguiña', p. 231). Similarly, when the figure of Conrado merges with that of Marcos (pp. 310-11), this is a (fictional?) account told ostensibly by Java to Justiniano as observed by Sarnita, and thus unreliable. In *Un día*, Klein speaks in conversation of his loss of memory, his withdrawal from the social and political world, and the cultivation of his sexual desires (for instance on pp. 316-17). However, events are never focalized through him.

The fact that the 'vencidos' are the protagonists of the novels and that the novelistic world of Marsé is that of the anarchist-sympathising, Barcelona working

class (Ruiz Veintemilla 1984, 197) can obviously be given an autobiographical explanation. However, it is a deliberate choice on Marsé's part to write from the perspective of the defeated Republicans and, importantly, to represent the position of the latter dialectically, implicitly recognizing the hierarchical, *vencedor-vencido* power relations operating in post-civil war Spain:

Lo de los personajes marginados [en mi obra narrativa] tiene una respuesta simplísima y muy rápida: porque me interesan infinitamente más que los triunfadores. Siempre me ha interesado más el perdedor que el que gana. En cuanto a la segunda parte de su pregunta [¿por qué esa dialéctica entre dos clases sociales diferentes?] es un dialéctica entre el éxito y el fracaso; entre el poder y la indefensión. (Samaniego 1993, 380)³⁰

According to Amell, one of the repeated sub-themes of Marsé's novels is the conflictual relationship between the two groups of protagonists, the defeated Republicans and their children, who did not experience the War directly (1984, 24). In *Un día* the alienation from the Civil War generation is expressed most negatively by the young man Julio Lambán, who refers to the *maquis* as 'toda esa pandilla de locos exaltados' (p. 263) and describes Jan as a criminal, not a political idealist (p. 266). According to Devlin, in Marsé's early novels, like *Encerrados*, the younger generation, while not combatants in the War, nevertheless 'inherited the economic, political and social consequences of the defeat'. The subsequent alienation they felt 'expresses itself as a rejection of cherished symbols of both victor and vanquished' (1984, 29). He sees this as explaining the subversion of the avenging Republican hero myth that occurs in *Un día*, which will now be discussed.

The demythification of the *pistolero*

In *Si te dicen*, despite the caveat regarding the instability of the frame narrative, the episodes involving the *maquis* (Chapters 4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 24) are based on historical events. Ruiz Veintemilla concludes that 'la acción novelesca se

30. Labanyi 2000 also points out how much of post-Franco Spanish fiction is concerned with recovering or giving voice to the experience of those who were confined to 'the dustbin of history' by official history or 'the master narrative of success stories' (2000, 73; see also pp. 71-74).

aparta muy poco de lo real' (1984, 201).³¹ Read referentially, the novel portrays accurately the situation of the anti-Franco resistance. Ruiz Veintemilla singles out the following elements:

- 1.º) Las tensiones entre los militares de los distintos partidos que integraban la guerrilla urbana [see pp. 105-106; 134; 186-87, 188]
- 2.º) La falta de coordinación y las discrepancias entre la gente del interior y los exiliados de Toulouse, más la falta de medios económicos y de armas [see *Si te dicen* pp. 128, 131, 187, 194, 242]
- 3.º) El Socorro Rojo en ayuda a los detenidos en la cárcel Modelo de Barcelona [see *Si te dicen* pp. 193, 242-43]
- 4.º) El cruce de los Pirineos para pasar refugiados a Francia [see *Si te dicen* pp. 129, 195, 291]
- 5.º) La angustia y el miedo de los chivatazos, detenciones, torturas y muertes de compañeros, fusilados o abatidos a tiros en las calles por la policía [see *Si te dicen*, pp. 132, 213-14, 216, 246, 282, 334-37]. (1984, 191)

However, the novel's portrayal of the *maquis* is complex. It does not subscribe to a manichean perspective in which all Nationalists are sadistic villains and Republicans are blameless victims or vice-versa. As Labanyi argues, both the form and content of *Si te dicen* reveal a darker side to the Republican myth of the heroic anti-Franco resistance:

The replacement of fact by fiction is the result not just of censorship and propaganda but, more specifically, of the political witch-hunts of the immediate postwar years [...] At the same time the fact that Marcos has had to go into hiding twice [...] reminds the reader that this climate of suspicion ('espionitis') was the product not only of Nationalist repression but also of the factional in-fighting that occurred on the Republican side during the civil war. (1989, 141)

Significantly, the only Republican leaders directly mentioned in the novel, Nin and Durruti, not only belonged to the most utopian revolutionary groups, but also met their deaths in suspicious circumstances. These figures have a particular historical resonance in that, for instance, 'recriminations over Durruti's death provided a focus for bitter confrontation born of contradictory interpretations of how the struggle against the rebels should be carried out' (Preston 1996, 128). That is, their deaths symbolize the confrontation between those elements who favoured the construction of a liberal-democratic, centralised capitalist state and more libertarian elements on the Republican

31. Marsé claims that researched the anarchist movement for the novel, particularly into the postwar 'guerrillas urbanas' (Sinnigen 1982, 112). See also Preston 'The Urban and Rural Guerilla of the 1940s' in Graham and Labanyi 1995, 229-37.

Left which was to find its final expression in the May fighting (see Graham 1999). By means of such allusions, Marsé's novels, like Simon's, work against an idealized image of the nobility of the Republican cause and of Republican unity. However, unlike Simon's novels, Marsé not only refers explicitly to the various factions involved in this internal struggle, but also shows that their differences survive the Republican defeat and are carried over into the postwar resistance movement.

The focalization through an external narrator in Chapter 4 explicitly establishes an ironic distance from the *maquis* when they first appear. For instance, there are the references to the Machado poem which closes the novel: 'Hombres de hierro, forjados en tantas batallas, soñando como niños' (*Si te dicen*, p. 60; see also Garvey 1980, 377-78). The *maquis* are represented as clinging onto the illusory notion that the Franco regime cannot last, a self-deception which prevents them from fully engaging with the present reality:

Y pensar que al principio todos decían esto no puede durar, esto no aguantará, sin sospechar que el eco de sus palabras llegaría arrastrándose a través de treinta años hasta los sordos oídos de sus nietos. Estaban en babia, ciegos, estaban muy lejos de verse empuñando las armas otra vez, de hecho ya ni siquiera podían imaginarse así: la cara tapada con el pasamontañas y pistola en mano empujando la puerta giratoria del Banco Central, o colocando una bomba en el monumento a la Legión Cóndor. Hombres de hierro, forjados en tantas batallas, llorando por los rincones de las tabernas como niños. (p. 102)

This passage anticipates almost word for word the closing lines of the novel, suggesting a fatalistic sense of circularity: the *maquis*' resistance is represented as doomed to failure in advance, and their individual struggles to historical oblivion. It is implied that it is their 'macho' refusal to accept their defeat that infantilizes them. The novel shows 'la degradación de sus ideales, que degeneran en una actitud de corrupción y escapismo' (Montenegro 1981, 146; also Amell 1984, 130-31) - from their supposedly 'political' robberies in the Ritz to the murder of Carmen/Menchu by Jaime Viñas (for example p. 337). This murder is, in fact, represented as the culmination of the process of corruption:

el viejo Ford en cuyo asiento trasero, empuñando un mazo de madera, se sentaría el espectro derrotado de diez años de resistencia inútil y descabellada, el muñón sangriento de una ideología corrompida cavando su propia tumba en el solar ruinoso de Can Compte con una pala [...] aquella fría noche de enero en que había de morir asesinada. (p. 248)³²

Towards the end of the book, an unidentified voice (probably Marcos) describes the gradual disillusionment of the remaining *maquis* as inevitable but also as caused by a fundamental lack of direction and leadership among the opposition:

Me pregunto cómo puede ser: ¿así has de verles siempre, robando, estafando, matando y al final peleándose entre ellos, destruyéndose a sí mismos? Así están en esta cabeza, siempre, así viven y así mueren cada día conmigo y sin escapatoria posible, en un espacio aún más reducido que esta oscura ratonera. Y si supieras la de chorizadas que se llegaron a inventar. Otros eran más limpios. Luis Lage, por ejemplo: había luchado en el frente de Aragón y cayó herido en la retaguardia de Lérida, trabajó en una fábrica de material de guerra en Anglés y finalmente acabó con los huesos en la Modelo, hasta que lo han soltado [...] Y qué quieres. Qué se podía hacer. Cómo extirpar aquél cáncer, aquella gangrena, cómo parar el tiempo: desde la muerte de Sendra ya no habrá quién los controle [...] el gran Navarro y Jaime metidos en un asunto de menores, el Fusam asustando a los panaderos desaprensivos, el mismo Ramón no tardaría en distraer varios miles de sus entregas a la Central [...] y el carota recuerda, ése sí que ya había entrado en barrena, ni siquiera se tomaba la molestia de ir a esperarlos en la Rabassada: colándose en los coches cuando van a arrancar, en cualquier calle, clava la pistola en las costillas del fulano y lo obliga a meterse en algún callejón desierto. (pp. 320-21)

In *Un día*, the representation of the *maquis* and their activities a decade on is similar to *Si te dicen*, and indeed, many of the same characters recur. At various points it is suggested that the *maquis*' continuing resistance is futile and irrelevant.³³ Indeed, the novel ends with an almost identical reworking of the final phrase of the earlier novel and which also serves to distance the reader from the *maquis* (p. 393). However, in *Un día* we do not see the *maquis* performing any of their 'heroic' exploits and descriptions of them are focalized primarily through Jan's disabused viewpoint. Marsé comments that Jan is a defeated man 'sin ninguna aspiración política' (Sinnigen 1979, 122). On his return from prison, he refuses to take part in any subversive activities and

32. However, even the representation of Jaime Viñas is nuanced: we are told, for instance, how he uses his friendship with Carmen/Menchu to improve the situation of the imprisoned Lage (p. 318).

33. For instance, their 'resistance' also degenerates into mere banditry (see also Balbina's dismissal of the anarchists as 'unos fanáticos egoístas' pp. 146-47).

apparently only wants a quiet life (see for instance pp. 243-45 and 332-43).³⁴

In retrospect, the main cause of Jan's rejection of Falcón's plan to assassinate Klein (p. 337) is his love for Klein. However, he also rejects it because it is not part of a coherent political strategy but motivated primarily by revenge (see pp. 337-38) and because the regime's control of the press is such that any actions taken by the *maquis* will be represented as acts of banditry. On p. 352, Jan refers to the atmosphere of 'clandestinidad ya corrupta e inoperante que desde su salida de la cárcel venía percibiendo en todas las cosas'. The rise of El Mandalay shows that, while many of the *maquis* have become genuinely politically disillusioned, others have profited opportunistically from robberies carried out in the forties ostensibly to fund the resistance. Jan's fatalistic view is that even if their activities (as detailed on p. 334) are still motivated by political idealism, their actions will find little response outside their own narrow circles, particularly among the younger generation for whom the ideological divisions of Nationalist and Republican are largely forgotten or meaningless.

Jan wants nothing more to do with political activism, and he also rejects Falcón's bankrupt discourse of patriotism (here, presumably, Catalan nationalism) – a discourse which is central, of course, to Falangist ideology: 'La patria es una carroña sentimental, y yo nunca más me empacharé de eso' (p. 342). However, he claims that it is not his underlying political beliefs that have changed, only his 'relación personal con estas ideas' (p. 335). Moreover, his apparent stoicism and detachment from his former political affiliations masks an inner sense of existential alienation and despair. Delivering Klein home after one of his drunken forays, Jan is literally overcome with nausea:

volvía a experimentar súbitamente en su ánimo el tirón hacía abajo, el mismo vértigo que sintiera el primer día de su cautiverio en una fría celda del penal de Burgos, años atrás, cuando algo le hizo comprender de pronto que su vida se descolgaba de la vida, que perdía pie, que ya nada volvería jamás a tener sentido, ni siquiera los recuerdos. (p. 268)³⁵

34. See also Devlin on the incident where Jan chides the boys for urinating on the stencil of Franco on the wall (see *Un día*, pp. 12-15): 'Jan [...] has had twelve years of imprisonment in which to experience the harsh reality of the régime' (1984, 33).

35. See also p. 104, where Jan's fear of a closed future is related to the image of Klein's tower: 'el miedo, tal vez, de saber que todo acabó y al mismo tiempo sentir que debería volver a empezar'. The referent 'todo' is of course ambiguous and could refer either to Jan's political ideals and activities or, with hindsight, to his relationship with Klein. In addition, on p. 352, there is a

Jan's present and future are irremediably marked by his political past. Despite his desire to lead a quiet life, his release reawakens memories of defeated revolutionary hopes, and both the inhabitants of the *barrio* and his ex-comrades will not or cannot leave him alone, since this would mean renouncing their own beliefs. As the now adult narrator reflects at the end of the novel:

Seguramente, aquel supuesto huracán de venganzas que esperábamos llegaría con él, y sobre el que tanto se había fantaseado en el *barrio*, no escondía nada en realidad, todo lo más la ilusión contrariada del vencido, la cicatriz de un sueño, un sentimiento senil que había sobrevivido a los altos, heroicos ideales..... (p. 287)

Devlin reads the novel's complex focalization as exploiting this gap between the popular and adolescent view of Jan as the avenging 'pistolero' and the reality of the ageing Republican longing for a quiet life, in order to subvert the myth of the heroic resistance fighter. While this is true, Jan appears haunted more by the failure of his love affair with Klein than with the defeat of his revolutionary ideals. The use of prolepsis in the narrative gives the fatalistic impression that the events leading up to his death are already played out, and thus that his fate is pre-determined. Apart from the allusions to future events discussed above, Jan anticipates the assassination (p. 340). Such allusions weaken the suspense of the novel, a technique Gould Levine also identifies in *Si te dicen*, where the constant mention of the effect before the cause produces 'la radical desdramatización de los sucesos' (Gould Levine 1979, 317).

This technique is not used as radically in *Un día*, which also maintains suspense by keeping the reader in the dark as to Jan's real motivations and as to the precise form future events will take (see Devlin 1984, 33). Nevertheless, Jan's death is described in terms of events coming full circle and reaching their inexorable outcome. This is symbolised by the fact that, on the day of the assassination, he wears the same clothes as on the first day he entered the tower. The switch from external to internal focalization clearly expresses his own sense of fatalism: 'cuando en cierto modo la decisión ya estaba tomada: no haría nada por facilitar las cosas, pero tampoco haría nada por evitarlas' (p. 387). This sense of finality is compounded by the references to the onset of winter, the closure of the tower, and to events in the *barrio* such as the confinement of Bibilonia (see p. 380; see also Gilabert 1985, 100, on the prevalence

reference to Jan's painful awareness of the passing of time ('el agujón del paso del tiempo').

of symbols of old age and disappointment in the novel).

On this reading, Jan is a tragic figure, according to the definition of modern tragedy in the *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*:

What makes [particular characters] tragic figures is that they have qualities of excellence, of nobleness, of passion; they have virtues and gifts that lift them above the ordinary run of mortal men and women. In tragedy these attributes are seen to be insufficient to save them either from self-destruction or from destruction brought upon them [...] The overwhelming part about tragedy is the element of hopelessness, of inevitability. (Cuddon, 1991, 985)

Jan fits the bill in that, despite his ‘pistolero’ image, he is intelligent, has integrity and is capable of sensitivity and reflection (see for instance, pp. 283-84; 317; and the exchanges with El Mandalay and Falcón on pp. 358-62 and 332-43 respectively). Jan’s *hamartia* - his passion for Klein - is the cause of the three disastrous and defining events in his life, in chronological succession and in ascending order of gravity. Firstly, the tree-climbing episode, which puts paid to his boxing career (p. 370); secondly, the robbery and his betrayal of his brother and El Mandalay; and thirdly, his imprisonment (see pp. 148-50). Finally, when he emerges from prison, his loyalty to this intimate memory (pp. 383-84) again outweighs any familial and political loyalties, and leads to his death. He also experiences moments of *anagnorisis*, for instance in his prison cell (p. 268).

On the other hand, Devlin sees more black humour than tragedy in the novel. The plot is, according to him, both far-fetched and hackneyed: ‘a strange blend of the most symbolic contrivances of a classical drama that turns upon concealed and mistaken identity, to which is added the equally conventional Hollywood motif of the gangster’s pursuit of social advancement’. He views the relationship between Klein and Jan as implausible because lacking in any psychological depth or development (see 1984, pp. 34-36). However, in my view, what Marsé *does* with these ‘hackneyed’ elements shows that *Un día* is not intended simply as yet another twist on the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, the archetypal story of star-crossed lovers which Marsé has already sardonically reworked in *Últimas tardes*.

Jan meets his death not because of a romantic notion of fate, or the power of the gods, but because of history. That is, the specific social and political context within which his sexual or romantic feelings are articulated - the same constraints which doom the affair between Manolo and Teresa in *Últimas Tardes*. Both conventional gender

roles and the nature of class relations in pre- and post- civil war Spain preclude anything but a negative outcome to his passion for Klein. Jan is clearly aware of this fact: 'Así había que ser, porque ese garabato fulgurante de su mano era lo único que aún podía tener sentido para ellos' (p. 391). Suau also comments on the social desperation motivating Jan's actions:

Pero tal vez en su fuero interno sintió nuevamente la necesidad de jugarse el tipo para hacer real lo que no era más que un sueño, como había hecho siempre, como cuando se jugó por primera vez el porvenir aquel domingo de primavera que se encaramó a un abeto para alcanzar una pelota de tenis. Porque en cierto modo, Jan Julivert escaló aquel árbol lo mismo que un muchacho de esta barriada puede escalar un sueño..... (p. 378)

Jan's real 'flaw' is thus that he thinks he can transgress class and sexual boundaries - although the above passage implies that he intuitively feels from the outset that the forces ranged against him are too strong. This literal and metaphorical ascent ending in a fall shows that Jan is thus another 'trepador' or 'pícaro' figure, like Manolo, whose attempt to transgress class - and, here, gender - boundaries by means of a sexual liaison ends in either death or imprisonment. The figure of the 'trepador' and the linking of sexuality and sexual repression with class relations occurs throughout Marsé's work, but is particularly evident in *Últimas tardes* and *La oscura historia*.³⁶

Thus the Jan-Klein relationship signals a return to what Sherzer calls Marsé's 'pre-dialectical' vision of the social world of post-war Spain, since it contains a rigid conception of transgression and punishment (see Sherzer 1982, especially 'La predialéctica y la dialéctica' & 'Una tensión continua: la ironía y la dialéctica'). However, unlike Manolo's relationship with Teresa, Jan's relationship with Klein does not seem initially purely predicated on his desire for social ascent and the post-prison Jan is disabused of the notion that there can be any happy outcome for his love for Klein.

Secondly, the novel implies that the same cultural context which defines masculinity as heterosexual and which renders Jan's sexual orientation taboo also informs the supposedly progressive discourse of the resistance fighter: in both sexual and political terms, Jan is trapped within the role of 'macho' hero as is shown below.³⁷

36. On the 'pícaro' figure in Marsé's novels, see Magnini González 1985.

37. The link between a stereotypical construction of masculinity and violence is also made explicit by the quote from Mae West which opens Part Three of the novel (p. 201).

Finally, the novel seems to be making the more general point that ‘codes, be they social, political, moral or sub-cultural, may not be broken with impunity’ (Devlin 1984, 37) - at least not in so rigidly gender- and class-codified a society as thirties and forties Spain.

If we consider the third novel, *El embrujo*, El Kim is the most one-dimensional, and thus the most conventionally ‘heroic’, of the *maquis* characters because, as is made clear from the beginning, he is also the protagonist in Forcat’s exotic adventure narrative. The explicitly ‘folletinesco’ nature of this part of the narrative renders the character of Kim much less poignant and complex than that of Jan. Nevertheless, even while representing Kim as the idealised freedom fighter whose life is selflessly dedicated to the realisation of his political ideals (see p. 60), Forcat also represents him as haunted by the Republican defeat and by memories of past suffering (see p. 84).

In fact, Kim undertakes his trip to Shanghai not just out of loyalty to Lévy but for more personal reasons: to break with the past and forge a new life for himself, and his family (according to Forcat). He is also driven by a (less conscious) desire to erase his revolutionary past and identity (see p. 112): as he gradually admits to himself, he no longer believes in the anti-Franco cause. This growing hopelessness leads to fatalism not just about the past but also about future acts of resistance:

lo que has dejado a tu espalda no es sólo la interminable derrota y tantas ilusiones perdidas, no sólo los camaradas muertos sino también los que aún han de morir [...] y verás derramada la sangre pasada y la futura [...] y recordarás a Nualart y Betancort y a Camps pudriéndose en la cárcel o quizá fusilados, en tantos sacrificios inútiles que jamás quedarán registrados en ninguna parte, tanta generosidad y tanto coraje que al cabo no remediará nada ni beneficiará a nadie (pp. 122-23)

Another theme related to the representation of the *maquis*’ loss of idealism in the novels is that of fraternal betrayal, symbolized in all three texts by the image of a scorpion. In *Si te dicen*, a gold scorpion is attached to Carmen/Menchu’s bracelet, which the *maquis* acquire through their robbery of the Ritz (see for instance pp. 130, 164 and 243):

Java explicó una vez más aquello de que los escorpiones, cuando se ven acorralados por el fuego y sin posibilidad de escapatoria, se revuelven contra sí mismos y se suicidan clavándose el aguijón envenenado de la cola. Dijo también que el escorpión es un bicho maléfico que trae mala suerte y representa el odio entre hermanos, la capacidad de autodestrucción que hay en el hombre. (p. 164)

It can be argued that the scorpion is an over-determined image. On the one hand it represents a universal human capacity for the destruction of others and, as is mentioned, for self-destruction. Yet in this context it inevitably reminds the reader of the destructive hatreds unleashed by the recent Civil War, with 'hermandad' understood both literally as divisions within the microcosm of a single family and, metaphorically, as a condition of shared nationality, with Spain represented as a 'family'.³⁸ However, since it is mentioned in relation to the *maquis*, the scorpion could be read as referring specifically the poisonous hatreds and fratricidal political divisions among the *maquis*. Labanyi, for instance, reads it as part of the *Si te dicen*'s meta-fictional commentary on the mythological discourse of the hero, a discourse common to both political Left and Right, but which here refers principally to the 'vencidos'. For her, the scorpion 'symbolises the fact that, as stock screen characters [the *maquis* and the 'fulana de lujo'] are trapped in the vicious circle of their image' (1989, 150).

In *El embrujo*, the scorpion image is explicitly used to allude to 'fraternal' betrayal in a political sense. It first appears in Kim's reunion with Lévy in Paris, after a description of how (like Conrado in *Si te dicen*) Lévy is consumed and poisoned by his memories of being tortured by the Gestapo, and by his desire for revenge. His psychological state is reflected in his decaying physical state:

El Kim escucha tenso [...] y por eso no alcanza a ver la señal agazapada a sus pies, pero yo sí la veo, nosotros sí la vemos: un alacrán de fuego que se arrastra en círculos concéntricos sobre las impolutas baldosas blancas, cercando a los dos amigos y moviendo a un lado y a otro su aguijón enhiesto, una uña escarlata y llameante. (p. 84)

The reader's attention is drawn here to the act of narration, to the presence of Forcat as the narrator, and hence, retrospectively, to the reliability of this account. The scorpion is accorded self-consciously symbolic connotations: it is both a 'señal' of the poisonous legacy of the past, and a proleptic sign of future betrayal. However, ironically, the scorpion's movement suggests that the two former comrades are united in the face of an external threat. In addition, the scorpion appears gendered, its sting given connotations of feminine glamour. Both these connotations are misleading,

38. Representing the nation as a (divided) family is a stock trope of Civil War and postwar cultural discourse, particularly on the Right. The first novel about the War permitted to be published under Franco, Gironella's *Los cipreses creen en dios* (1953), literally portrays the divisions of the pre-and Civil War Spain through the fate of a single family, the Alvears.

firstly, because the real danger faced by Kim is not external but fraternal: it comes not from his former political enemies (Meiningen is not an ex-Nazi), but from Lévy, who betrays Kim by attempting to exploit Kim's loyalty for his own ends. Secondly, Chen Jing is not a *femme fatale* since it is Lévy's own paranoia and obsession with the past that drives her to seek a lover (*El embrujo*, pp. 166-67). Like Suñer in *Le Sacre*, Lévy uses the discourse of political idealism to mask his personal feelings, in what turns out to be a banal case of sexual jealousy, and the unmasking of Lévy's real motives leads Kim finally to lose faith in his political ideals.

This whole episode is tinged with irony, since we learn retrospectively that it is a fictional account, designed, moreover, to mask the fact that Kim is not the betrayed, but the betrayer. With the arrival of El Denis, Kim is revealed not as the loyal friend, father and husband, the mythical Republican hero whose actions are motivated by political idealism, as depicted by Forcat. He has betrayed both El Denis and his own family by eloping with Carmen, and El Denis suggests that he may have betrayed his own men detained by the police in Barcelona (pp. 172-73). Finally, the image of the scorpion is explicitly associated with 'aquella soterrada violencia de los exiliados españoles discutiendo en reuniones interminables' (p. 96). The question here is whether Kim's disillusionment with revolutionary politics can be compared to Simon's representation of the disillusionment of the *engagé* intellectual. *El embrujo* appears here to be placing the heroic political discourse which - according to Forcat - motivates Kim's actions, on a par with the kind of romanticising discourse which informs Forcat's 'folletinesco' account of Kim's adventures in Shanghai. This point is discussed further below.

The themes of fraternal betrayal - both literal and political - and the linked theme of disillusionment with (revolutionary) political ideals are also central to *Un día*. Jan betrays his brother Luis both literally, in the sense that he double-crosses him over the robbery, and also betrays his ideological beliefs, renouncing his collaboration with the *maquis* on his release from prison, thus rejecting the political struggle to which his father and his brother dedicated their lives.

There is only a brief allusion to a scorpion in *Un día*; in the opening description of the *barrio* - on the night of Jan's imminent release from prison - when the light reflected from the streetlamp onto Néstor's harmonica is compared to 'un alacrán de plata' (*Un día*, p. 11). This could connote the metallic glint of guns and, by extension,

the myth of the ‘pistolero’ which Jan’s story eventually deconstructs. However, since ‘plata’ can also be a slang term for money, the glint of silver could also reinforce the notion of betrayal by alluding to the money paid to Judas.

The other animal referred to in this description is the lizard whose shadow is projected onto a wall. This explicitly foregrounds the way the novel draws on cinematic conventions, particularly in the boys’ fantasy vision of Jan as a *film-noir* hero, and is also an ‘ironic-foreshadowing’ of Néstor’s vain attempts to pair Balbina off with Jan (Devlin 1984, 30). The image of the lizard functions proleptically not so much as an image of fraternal betrayal, but of the failure of Jan to live up to the popular, mythical view of him as the avenging Republican hero (thus reinforcing Labanyi’s reading of the scorpion image in *Si te dicen*).

Un día is a complex and ironic novel which can be seen as a ‘parodia-homenaje’ of the *novela negra* (White 1992, 120). As stated, it is the gap between the boys’ fantasy view of Jan as the avenging hero and his actual behaviour and undisclosed motivations which provides the suspense and the (partly-retrospective) irony of the novel (see Marsé in Sinnigen 1979, 122). In fact, the adolescents’ idealised view ironically confirms Jan’s own cynical - or realistic - view that the younger generation do not understand the *maquis*’ continued resistance. What most interests the boys about Jan is his early boxing career and his association with guns: they know nothing of his political affiliations and actions (pp. 13-14).

According to Devlin, the novel sets the tone for its subsequent ambiguous focalization by introducing Jan through a ‘self-consciously cinematographic’ *mise-en-scène* (1984, 30; see also White 1992 on the *film noir* elements, both formal and thematic, in the novel, especially 109-13). The adolescent boys, particularly Nestor, want Jan to play the role of the avenging father-figure (Devlin compares their relationship to that of Telemachus and Ulysses). They see the *maquis* as a blend of the *film noir* gangster and the Western cowboy, exalting the mystique of violence that surrounds them for its own sake, like the boy narrators in *Si te dicen*. Jan is constructed by the boys as a composite of Edward G. Robinson, and of Alan Ladd in *Shane* – a view endorsed by the popular discourse of the adult inhabitants of the *barrio* (Devlin 1984, 32; see also White 1992, 111-13).³⁹

39. Again, such allusions can also be related to Labanyi’s notion of the ‘spectral’ nature of the past (see n.6). In the case of *Un día*, Jan, seen through the ‘spectral’ lens of the *film noir* is a kind of ghost figure, who returns from the dead to reawaken the memories of the inhabitants of

Devlin highlights the numerous general cinematographic allusions in the novel, particularly in the posters painted by Suau, the 'inveterate mythmaker' (1984, 35), and the references to the Western genre (such as *El Coyote*, *Un día*, p. 290), and also the allusions to specific celluloid heroes (1984, 31-32). Jan fails to live up to the conventions of either genre: he 'offends the cowboy's code of non-domesticated masculinity by his fondness for knitting, as he contravenes a convention of the gangster genre through his inability to handle a car' (1984, 36; White 1992, 116-17).

Although according to Devlin Jan's death is neither heroic (since it results from his passivity) nor tragic (since it releases him from a stagnant, futureless existence), in another sense it still conforms to the conventions of both gangster and western genres. He is shot in his car; his reaching into his pocket interpreted as the gangster's reflex of reaching for his gun (p. 391). Jan dies 'as befits the rôle assigned to him by the society which narrates his story, a rôle within which, despite his release from physical confinement, he is still imprisoned' (1984, 30).

However, it is not just Jan and Klein who are imprisoned and eventually killed by a stereotypical and rigid code of masculinity. For the younger generation too - as represented by Nestor - viewing life through this mythological lens has damaging consequences. The symbol of the lizard, connoting Jan's failure to live up to the *barrio*'s fantasy of the 'pistolero' figure, has already been mentioned. Yet it also symbolizes the frustration of Néstor's own fantasy view of Jan, of the desires and expectations with which Néstor invests him, and thus a different kind of betrayal, that of Néstor's need for a father figure.

Thus the novels suggest that, on the one hand, the *maquis* are central to the boys' lives. Literally, in the sense that they are the children's fathers or that some of the children have a form of alternative employment with the *maquis*, acting as messengers or even helping them in their robberies. The *maquis* and their exploits - real or imagined - also form a central part of the boys' imaginative world, their *aventis* and discussions (see for instance p. 81). The enigma of Marcos's disappearance, and of his relationship with the 'puta roja' is one of their major preoccupations and games (*Si te dicen*, p. 110). How the boys construct an alternative history of the period to the

the *barrio*. In the sense that Jan's obsessive clinging to the memory of his past love for Klein, he can be seen as having a 'melancholic' relation to the past. However, as will be argued, Jan is a more complex figure in that, in terms of his relationship to the history of the *barrio* and by extension to the national past, he seems to advocate a relationship of 'mourning', as his rejection

official, Francoist version is addressed further in Chapter Four.

However, most of the children in the novels have fathers who are either dead or absent, or who fail them in some sense (as is epitomized by the released Luis Lage's macho behaviour towards his son Luisito; pp. 299-300). Labanyi comments that 'it is the boys' desire to create substitute authority figures that leads to their cult of the hero in their stories' (1989, 143-44). She describes how the adolescent focalizers in *Si te dicen* have 'an ambiguous attitude to father figures and authority in general' (1989, 144). They both idealize the defeated Republicans (among whom figure many of their fathers) and yet undermine their authority, stressing their impotence - just as they do with the Nationalist 'heroes' such as Conrado and Justiniano.

Labanyi sees *Si te dicen* as also carrying out a critique of the macho 'pistolero' and in this sense as iconoclastic of the discourses of both political Right and Left. The cult of the hero in Nationalist ideology converges in the novel with the cult of stereotypical masculine behaviour in popular, particularly cinematographic, culture of the forties, both Spanish and, increasingly, American (see Labanyi 1989, 144-46). The numerous intertextual references to the heroes and plots of films, comics and pulp fiction (and to cinemas and cinema-going) function on a meta-narrative level to emphasize the mythifications involved in the boys' own storytelling. However, they also highlight their diffusion in the cultural discourse which surrounds the boys, in the complementary hegemonic (Falangist) and contestatory (Republican) discourses of heroic masculinity.⁴⁰

In addition, the sadistic and voyeuristic content and the nightmarish narrative form of the children's games, mixing real events and characters with fictional elements, reflect an adult world still traumatised by the recent conflict (*Si te dicen*, p. 110). On the one hand, the adolescents' tales glamorize real-life violence by mediating it through the popular cultural forms that they find exciting. Their repeated acting out of scenes of war and torture (the prime example being the scene in which La Fueguiña 'performs' her own rape by the *moros*, pp. 254-56) can be read as embodying an unhealthily obsessive need to 're-enact' the violence and fear associated with the War. It also

of the *maquis*' current activities shows.

40. Examples of comics referred to are: *Signal* (p. 123); of romantic fiction: *El prisionero de Zenda* (p. 204); of songs: *Bésame mucho* and *La perfidia* (p. 221), of films: *La Corona de Hierro*, *La Prisionera Desnuda* and *Suez* (p. 253). See also Labanyi 1995, 207-214, on the use of censorship in mass culture to promote Nationalist values, in particular the prevalence of 'propaganda comics' (pp. 211-12).

reveals their internalization of the ‘victor-vanquished’ division, the memory of which is actively kept alive by Nationalist propaganda (see Labanyi 1989, 147-48). On this reading, their ‘games’ would reflect both the generalised traumatising and amorality of the post-war world and, in particular, the alienation of the younger generation, who have transformed the generalized sense of powerlessness and terror into a masochistic form of pleasure.

On the other hand, a more positive reading of these games is to see them as an attempt to cognitively master and thus render *less* alienating the confused postwar reality, or as a way of keeping alive the popular memory of the past (see also Labanyi 1989, pp. 149-50 and 172-73; 2000, p. 75). Nevertheless, for Labanyi, however one reads the boys’ obsessive storytelling, the important difference between them and the *maquis* is that while the latter appear trapped within the *film noir* or western discourse, the boys recognize and self-consciously manipulate its fictionality (1989, 150).

While it is true that the novel offers a critique of the *maquis* through its ironic allusions to the discourse of violent heroism underpinning popular cultural forms, *Si te dicen* and *Un día* do not simply represent the *maquis* as cardboard cutout gangsters. The next section will show how, in this respect the characterization of the *maquis* in Marsé’s novels is very different to Simon’s representation of the militiamen as ‘tous taillés sur le même modèle’ (*Le Palace*, p. 333).

Representing the Resistance

The use of *film-noir* conventions in Marsé’s novels, most explicitly in *Un día*, suggests that the discourse of violent masculinity, informed and reinforced by popular cultural forms of the postwar period (as embodied in the Hollywood *film-noir* gangster or the heroes of both official and censored comics, such as *El Guerrero del Antifaz* or *Superman*) underpins not only Nationalist discourse but the figure of the heroic resistance fighter (see Labanyi 1989, 145-46; 1995, 211-12). Montenegro (1981) reads the *maquis*’ progressive loss of idealism in *Si te dicen* as another facet of the text’s subversion of the Falangist myth of a new dawn, yet (as later in *Un día*), the subversion of such Nationalist imagery of rebirth also undermines the heroic discourse of the Republican resistance. As Labanyi says, the novel shows that ‘both political Left and Right are guilty of mythification’ in that ‘the resistance fighters, as survivors of a

defunct Republic are living in a world more unreal than that of Francoist ideology' (1989, 139; see also note 6).

Thus on one hand the representation of the *maquis* in Marsé's novels highlights their inability or refusal to comprehend that 'the guerrilla in its various forms was never really more than the rearguard of the defeated Republican forces' (Preston in Graham and Labanyi 1995, 236). Yet the novels do not simply represent the defeated Republicans as suffering from historical hubris or solely motivated by cynical opportunism. In *Si te dicen*, their transformation into 'carteristas y chorizos' (p. 323) is gradual and resisted more by some than others: as the novel shows, some of the *maquis*, particularly the anarchists, are 'más limpios que otros' (see pp. 320-21).

Palau is the first to reject the efficacy of the strategy of 'octavillas y petarditos' and claim that 'nuestra primera obligación es vaciarles [a los fachas] la cartera' (see also pp. 102, 136-37, 244-45 and 322-23), even though his actions eventually lead to the imprisonment of his own son. However, the novel's representation of Palau and his robberies is ambiguous. Palau is not represented as a mere opportunist: at one point he retorts 'Yo no hice la revolución por un real, faieros' (p. 189). While his taste for the good life pre-dates and overrides any political commitment (p. 106), this pragmatism also helps him resist the regime, in his own fashion, surviving into the seventies whereas the others, with the exception of Lage, do not (p. 133).

Moreover, the view that the resistance desperately needs funds and these can be obtained by robbing the regime's elite (p. 104) is often presented sympathetically, whereas the more idealistic *maquis* are represented as engaged in interminable discussions on strategy and rigidly clinging to outmoded principles. Palau's assessment of Navarro as 'un anarquista tan disciplinado que duerme en posición de firmes' (p. 242) is more mocking than admiring, and he is represented at times as a pragmatic Robin Hood figure. Hearing that the Anarchist organisation in France is not supporting the exiled wives of el Fusam and Navarro, he sends loot from his robberies to Montpellier with a note reading 'aquí se vive de realidades' (p. 243). In addition, he appears the most humane of the group in defending Marcos (see pp. 133-34), attributing Marcos's mental state to the trauma of having to 'limpiar la retaguardia' in the War (p. 188).

In contrast, the anarchist leadership in exile, represented by Sendra, dogmatically refuses to confront the political reality of the new Spain and adapt the

group's aims to the new circumstances (p. 132). In addition, we are shown the damaging effects of the *maquis*' struggle on their families, who not only face possible torture or imprisonment but also have to survive the terrible conditions of the *años de hambre* while their men are in prison or in exile (see Chapter 11). Luis Lage's wife explicitly describes the ongoing resistance as futile (pp. 212-13).

However, despite the anti-heroic elements of the representation of the *maquis*, the novel often refers in elegaic tone to their very real sacrifices and the genuineness of their political beliefs, even while emphasising the hopelessness and eventual corruption of the Republican cause. The *maquis* are not represented as one-dimensional 'pistoleros', only seen in the thick of the action, but are humanised by also being described in relation to their families 'dedicados a hacer cosas normales sin riesgo alguno' (for example see pp. 186 and 317). While this forms part of the demythification of the heroic freedom fighter, the *maquis* are represented in the final analysis as victims of their historical context, as the passage on pp. 320-21 suggests.⁴¹

In addition, as Champeau comments that, although many characters in *Si te dicen* appear as either 'fantomatiques' and/or are associated with diabolical adjectives and elements such as fire and water (1983, 367-68), it is the Nationalist figures such as Conrado who are most associated with diabolical practices. Conrado perverts Java, who in metaphorical terms sells his soul to gain social advancement, and who plays Luzbel in the play directed by Conrado, 'the rebel who opts for corruption rather than submit to God's design' (Labanyi 1989, 172). Thus Conrado is an inverted God figure, a voyeur pulling the strings from behind the curtain in order to 'acaudillar las alegrías y las penas de los demás' (*Si te dicen*, p. 311). His power to degrade others sexually and morally is a continuation of his pre-war power to corrupt Aurora (see Labanyi 1989, 173-74). As such, he seems implicitly identified with Franco (the use of *acaudillar* on p. 311 emphasizes this).

The fact that the novel closes (pp. 366-68) with a description of the final meeting in the seventies between Lage and Palau encapsulates the novel's complex representation of the *maquis*. The shifting external/internal focalization of these final pages, from third person external to first person plural narrator (presumably Lage) and back, creates an ambivalent response on the part of the reader. The description of the

41. See also the description of the 'triumphal' entry of the Nationalists into Barcelona (pp. 132-33)

two old men is full of pathos although it is also ironically distanced. Both explicitly and implicitly (for instance, through the ironic reversal of the final line) we are reminded of the generational gap between those who fought and were defeated in the Civil War, and their children - and beyond them to the very different situation of contemporary Spanish youth ('sin saber que estas palabras [esto no puede durar] llegarían con la vacuidad del eco hasta los sordos oídos de sus hijos y sus nietos').

Si te dicen also shows us another flipside to the heroic *maquis* in the figure of Marcos. Marcos's response to defeat is to withdraw from the postwar world, both physically and mentally. At times he appears to take part in the *maquis*' actions (see for instance pp. 133-35, 245-46 and 333) and, significantly, he is also associated with Palau's robberies (p. 244). Yet he is also represented as being too terrified to participate fully in the group (see pp. 103, 132, and 133). On the other hand, his withdrawal from postwar social and political reality occurs before the Nationalist victory: he first goes into hiding because of the purge of the POUM (p. 107),⁴² and his subsequent fate is uncertain (again, numerous explanations are given for instance p. 365-66). However, Java describes his brother hiding in the *trapería* as follows:

una voz hablando sola, una memoria en continua expansión, vasta y negra como la noche, retrocediendo en el recuerdo y también anticipándose a él, adelantándolo para verlo llegar desfigurado, desmentido, devorado por la musarañas del olvido y de la mentira en la medrosa memoria de la gente [...] Quién sabe lo que será de esta voz el día de mañana, camarada, ojalá se pudra y mis hijos no tengan que oírla nunca, ojalá no quede ni rastro ni eco de ella para nunca jamás. (pp. 309-10)

This description is unreliable: even if it were true, Java would presumably represent his brother's fate in a form designed to appeal to the Nationalist Justiniano. However, despite being motivated by his fear of persecution by the regime, Marcos' self-incarceration is portrayed as a retreat into fantasy, an inability to accept historical reality, and the negation of his revolutionary ideals. In terms of the novel's theme of how to deal with the cultural legacy and memory of the Civil War, it is interesting to note that his inability to leave the past behind traps Marcos in Champeau's 'infernal'

42. However, true to the narrative's plurality and unreliability, it is also suggested that Marcos goes into hiding when he finds out Artemi Nin has been arrested (p. 132) or because he was one of the militiamen who killed Señor Galán (p. 322).

present, transformed into a mere spectre or ghost of himself.⁴³

On the other hand, a more complex and complicating attitude towards the memory of the Civil War and of revolutionary ideas can be detected in this passage. On the one hand, Java/Sarnita seemingly rejects Marcos's wartime actions, his revolutionary ideology and any attempt to remember the War itself ('ojalá se pudra' etc.). On the other hand, he suggests that the truth of this memory is being betrayed by 'la medrosa memoria de la gente'. In representing Marcos's response to events as a failure of historical nerve, as leading to madness and, presumably, death, is Marsé really endorsing the path of historical forgetfulness and conformity with the new regime taken by Marcos's younger brother? Not according to Labanyi: 'Java is also wrong to reject the past for the future. By betraying Marcos, he betrays the past and embraces a future of corruption' (1989, 171-72). The effects of his accommodation with the regime are made clear by the opening paragraph describing Java's corpse (p. 57).

Similarly, in *Un día*, the inexorability and fatalism stems not from the fact that the characters are in thrall to 'elementary passions', as in Simon's novels, but from the specific nature of the social world in which they move, in which Klein and Jan can never meet on equal terms. Moreover, as Devlin says, the particular way in which the fates of Jan and Klein, vanquished and victor, are intertwined undermines the essentializing binary opposition between the falangist and the *maquis*. In terms of their love relations and their sexual identity, both men are subject to 'la misma adversidad, la misma intolerancia, la misma derrota' (1984, 36-37; *Un día* p. 375).

In *El Embrujo*, Forcat's description of the fate of those who continue to resist Franco is supremely pessimistic (see pp. 122-23), suggesting their sacrifices will not only be ineffective but invisible in terms of the historical record (as at the end of *Si te dicen*). However, this passage ends with an exhortation to the listening adolescents not to become disillusioned in the face of 'el desaliento, la mala suerte o la enfermedad'. In fact, Forcat makes the invisible *maquis* visible by naming them and alluding to their individual or generic acts in his narrative, even if this narrative is (partly or wholly) fictional; just as, on a meta-fictional level, Marsé the author makes the *maquis* visible through his novels.

43. Again, Marcos can be seen as representing metaphorically both the return of the repressed, in his continued, spectral presence in the stories of the boys, and yet his own position can be seen as one of a 'melancholic' relation to the past. However, in realist terms, Marcos' inability to confront the postwar world is explicable in terms of the very real fear of persecution by the regime.

The theme of the positive value of fantasy as an escape from the harshness of (the postwar) reality, a view espoused (ironically or cynically?) by Forcat features in all Marsé's novels. Furthermore, Kim's attempt to turn his back on his revolutionary past and identity is represented as being as illusory as the pretence that the *maquis* can defeat the regime through the use of *guerilla* tactics. At several points in the Shanghai story, Kim senses that his attempt to break with his past life is doomed to failure. The use of the scorpion as a symbol of betrayal, and a premonition of danger has been discussed above. Another symbol of impending danger is the storm at sea when Kim steals the book. Here, the weight of Kim's past is metonymically transposed onto the old cargo boat itself (p. 100) and the intercalated verses addressing an alter ego or an objectified self ('tú') reinforce this sense of fatalism. The attempt to put geographical distance between himself and the city that represents the failure of his ideals ('la negra ruina de mi vida') ends with the realisation that the city symbolizes an internal landscape of memory, and that as such its destruction would mean the destruction of the self. The circularity of the poem echoes on a formal level the sense of closure of its content, restless movement leading back always to the same point:

Esta ciudad irá donde tú vayas [...] Nunca abandonarás esta ciudad. Ya para ti no hay otra, ni barcos, ni caminos que te libren de ella. Porque no sólo aquí perdiste tú la vida: en todo el mundo la desbaraste. (p. 100)

The poem foreshadows Kim's inability to repress his memories of Spain while in Shanghai, above all when the river Huang-p'u is transformed into 'la vorágine sangrienta' of the past ten years (see p. 168). Conventionally a symbol of the irrevocable march of time and of constant flux (as in Heraclitus), the river becomes transformed into a symbol of violent, but ultimately circular movement, the kind of metaphor used in Simon's representations of the revolution, as discussed in Chapter One. Moreover, it is compared to a mirror which, paradoxically, reflects not the present but the past.

The use of the river/mirror image suggests a complex and ambivalent relationship to past experience. On the one hand, the past is represented negatively as a maelstrom of violence; yet, on the other, Kim's attempt to break with the past ends in failure, and disorientation. Without the reflecting mirror of his past, he is no longer able to obtain a clear image or sense of his identity ('él prueba distraídamente a mirarse en las aguas

turbias, a mezclarse con ellos, pero no ve nada; acaso ya no queda tiempo ni para la reflexión’).

This is the reader’s final image of Kim, since at this point ‘real life’ interrupts Forcat’s story with the arrival of El Denis, and the revelation that some (if not all) the elements of Kim’s story - and by implication the story of the narrator, Forcat, himself - are fictional. However, in real life too, Kim has attempted to break with the past by eloping with Carmen. This is represented in the novel as an act of betrayal of past and present loyalties, with dire repercussions in El Denis’s revenge on Susana and her mother.

Thus the question raised in various forms in all three novels, and in relation to the *vencidos* in particular, is the following. How does one establish a relation with the past which allows them to ‘forget’, in the sense of being able to survive in the present, yet without negating or ‘betraying’ their past commitments or memories? In representing the *maquis*’ dilemma, the novels implicitly raise the wider question of the transmission of cultural memory in postwar Spanish society, where political and cultural repression of the Republican past is institutionalized and the regime is explicitly founded on an active misrecognition and mythologization of history. The problem of ‘desmemoria’ and of the mythification of historical memory is dealt with most directly in *La muchacha de las bragas de oro*, and is discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, this Chapter will consider briefly whether, as in Simon’s texts, the Civil War is universalised by references to other revolutionary situations, and whether the conflict is represented as the repetition of an earlier, archetypal set of events or as part of a closed, cyclical sequence of violence.

The only reference to another revolution occurs in *El embrujo*, when Esteban Climent tells Kim how the glamorous, cosmopolitan world of Nationalist Shanghai will be changed forever by the impending Communist takeover (pp. 153-54). However, the explicit allusion to ‘escenografía’ reminds the reader that this description of Shanghai’s European elite indulging in a frenzied social whirl before the tide of revolution sweeps them away draws on filmic conventions. In fact, it could be the transcription of an exotic scene from a Hollywood film of the forties, with its brilliantly-lit dancefloor and extras in white dinner jackets.

The revolutionary upheaval - represented by the stock images of a destructive ‘vendaval’ and by the image of shards of shattered glass - is described as a further

episode in an already played-out and universal story: ‘la consabida historia de siempre, la reiterada crónica de dejaciones, renunciaciones y adioses’ (p. 154). This seems to echo the view of revolution given in Simon’s texts. On the other hand, Kim’s sense of *déjà-vu* can be attributed to his own experiences in Spain (‘[n]ada había en todo eso que él no hubiese ya visto aquí con nosotros antes de la guerra’, p. 153) and the destruction of this particular way of life is not viewed with nostalgia. On the contrary, there is the sense that the disappearance of this privileged elite is overdue. The allusion to pre-civil war Spain reminds the reader that the glittering world of the Shanghai concessionists is founded on the same social injustice and structures of economic exploitation which those who opposed the Republican project in Spain were determined to preserve.

In linking the wartime episodes to the postwar repression, such as the execution of Nin, and portraying the continuing divisions among the *maquis* in the postwar period, it can be argued that the texts imply that intra-communal violence is archetypal. This would approach Simon’s view of such conflicts as rooted in atavistic human impulses, as is discussed in Chapter Three. Kim’s fate mirrors, for instance, that of Lévy, consumed by hatred because of his wartime past, by the violence inflicted on him during the Second World War. Similarly, in *Un día*, Jan is unable to escape his violent past, and the cycle of hatred culminates in his own death along with Klein’s. As has been discussed, the theme of a cycle of revenge and betrayal is foregrounded in Marsé’s texts, and is represented by the image of the scorpion moving in ‘círculos concéntricos’ in *El embrujo*, a similar image of closure and repetition to those found in Simon’s texts.

However, as with the theme of fraternal betrayal and the image of the scorpion, such representations can also convincingly be interpreted in the light of a specific cultural and historical legacy. For instance, as allusions to the legitimacy accorded to political violence in modern Spanish history (exemplified in the tradition of the ‘pronunciamiento’ and the ‘catastrophist’ discourse of the Right prior to the Civil War), or to the institutionalization of revenge under the Franco regime. Indeed, as regards the use of the scorpion image in *Si te dicen*, the text specifically alludes to Java’s betrayal of his brother Marcos to assure his own self-advancement, symbolizing the denunciations and acts of vengeance taking place at all levels of postwar Spanish society. This alludes to a state founded on the institutionalization of structures of betrayal and vengeance and to a specific ideological discourse, that of Francoism,

which sought to keep alive the victor-vanquished division (see for instance Preston 1996, 1-3; Abella 1984, Chapters I and II, 16-46).⁴⁴

Labanyi's discussion of Artemi Nin's execution by the Nationalists, which repeats elements from the design on Conrado's carpet, also throws light on the question of whether Marsé portrays political violence as 'archetypal'. The carpet's design is based on the nineteenth-century painting *The Execution of General Torrijos and his Comrades* by Antonio Gisbert, which depicts the Liberal Torrijos's execution on the beach at Málaga in 1831 (*Si te dicen*, pp. 65, 68 and 72). Labanyi argues that there are two ways of interpreting this repetition:

On the one hand the reference to Torrijos' death serves to set the political persecution of the postwar period in a broader historical perspective; on the other hand it can be seen as a statement about the ways in which history is handed down to posterity. Again we have an archetypal view of repression where the factual elements - the firing squad, the sea, the dawn - take on a symbolic significance transposed on to the characters of the novel (1989, 140-41)

The second point of Labanyi's argument, which relates to the question of how this image comments upon forms of historical transmission, is explored more fully in Chapter 4. As regards her first point, what it highlights is that the 'archetypal' repetition of violence has a particular content: the repression of *progressive* political agents in Spain by the agents of reaction. It is this historical reaction to attempts to modernize Spain that is represented as archetypal, not political repression *per se*, by agents from whatever side of the political spectrum. Similarly, while the association of dawn with death is partly a referential notation, given that this was the favoured time of day for executions (see Thomas 1986, 279), it also has a symbolic function. The image of the dawn execution, and the particular allusion to Torrijos, also returns us to the central theme of betrayal and censorship. But references to dawn, along with spring, are always used subversively in the novel, linked not with rebirth and growth but with death. In the Spanish context, such images connote the Nationalist discourse of a 'new dawn' and rebirth of the essential Spain (the most obvious example being the lines of *Cara al sol* quoted ironically in the title). Their juxtaposition with descriptions of the sufferings of ordinary Spaniards in the postwar period emphasises the harsh reality

44. The most significant of these was the 'Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas' (Abella 1984, 18-19).

behind the myth (see Montenegro 1981, 146-49). Rather than connoting growth and change, they are associated with the Nationalist-imposed political and social stagnation, or even regression.

As Labanyi argues, representing political violence as archetypal repetition is not necessarily a reactionary move. It can frame the Civil War within a *longue durée* perspective, highlighting a political and sociological continuity between the reactionary social forces which opposed Liberalism in the early nineteenth century, and the Nationalist rebellion. Indeed, as Preston comments, the Civil War itself can arguably be seen as ‘the culmination of a series of uneven struggles between the forces of reform and reaction which had dominated Spanish history since 1808’ (Preston 1996, 10).

Chapter Three

Introduction

This Chapter considers the representation of the Civil War in *Les Géorgiques*. It begins with a brief formal comparison with *Le Palace*, before analysing how the narrative constructs the three protagonists (L.S.M, the Cavalryman and O.) as subjects of knowledge. It then discusses how O.'s experience in the Spanish revolution is linked to the prototypical experiences of L.S.M. during the French Revolution. After examining their parallel trajectories, the Chapter considers Simon's rewriting of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*,¹ and how his critique of *engagement* is linked to the rejection of a certain model of historical writing. It explores how this rejection is motivated by Simon's phenomenological realist aesthetic, which in turn both determines and is determined by his rejection of progressive historical meta-narratives, specifically Marxism. Finally, the Chapter considers whether, in fact, while on the one hand rejecting meta-narratives, Simon's text implicitly constructs an alternative meta-narrative of historical change without progress.

Les Géorgiques: Formal Questions

Les Géorgiques is a more conventionally realist text than *Le Palace*. In particular, Simon does not practise contextual erasure/elision to the same extent, and the text uses physical and psychological description to individuate the protagonists. Indeed, all three have a historical referent, although their experiences are represented as archetypal. The text also contains clear temporal and geographical references. As other critics have commented, after Simon's formalist period, '*Les Géorgiques* seems to reopen the way to traditional interpretative criticism' (Duncan 1994, 68).

Nevertheless, the text does construct a certain referential ambiguity. One symptomatic example is when it omits the political affiliation of the soldiers opposing O. during the May fighting. Their superior equipment and health is sardonically contrasted to the ragged appearance of O.'s group (see pp. 297-308).

1. Henceforth referred to as *Homage*.

To a reader with any knowledge of the period the former obviously belong to the new Popular Army, yet this is left implicit. Equally, on pp. 328-29, the text stops short of naming the revolutionary thinkers after whom the Communist, CNT and POUM barracks are named.² This coyness on the part of the fictional text seems curious given that, in both the Pugh interview and *Les Géorgiques*, Orwell is criticised precisely for glossing over the concrete ideological and political differences that existed between these three factions.

The novel has three clear protagonists whose stories of war form the narrative. Simon says that O.'s story 'reduplicate[s] the story of L.S.M.' and singles out 'the decision, taken by both L.S.M. and O., to go back and fight in spite of everything, after the collapse of their illusions' (Pugh 1985, 8-9). Their trajectories follow the same pattern of political *engagement* ending in disillusionment identified in the earlier novels. However, the use of O. as a modern alter-ego to L.S.M. is complicated by the third (autobiographical) strand, the cavalryman's account of the 1940 *débâcle*. The interweaving of the three narratives is emphasised by the use of typography (alternating italic and roman script) and by the potential ambiguity over the focalizer. That is, sudden switches within the italicised text between the stories of the cavalryman and O. (for instance p. 24), and eventually the switch from roman to italic for the story of L.S.M.

However, even if the text fosters a certain ambiguity on the level of focalization, the use of different scripts, along with explicit spatio-temporal references, means that Simon *does* want to mark shifts in focalizers. There is a double focus in which the experiences of the three characters are interchangeable, yet at the same time temporally distinct. This produces an effect of both repetition and temporal dislocation, of diachrony without progress (see also Duncan 1983, 96-97). This effect would be lost if the uncertainty over focalization became too great and the three narratives effectively merged.

The cavalryman's narrative of the *débâcle* has thematic parallels to the stories of L.S.M and O., and his experiences are represented in a similar tone and style to events in wartime Barcelona. Firstly, the representation is phenomenologically realist, emphasizing physical sensations and perceptions,

2. Marx, Bakunin and Lenin respectively (see Simon's interview with Pugh, 1985, 9-10). Lenin is referred to - as in *Le Palace* - in pictorial terms.

and told from the perspective of the individual subject. Secondly, the narrative is anti-heroic and anti-romantic in tone: the cavalryman's experience of war is constituted by the experiences of rout and imprisonment (for instance pp. 79-137, particularly pp. 81, 83 and 94-96). However, this sardonic depiction does not simply function as fictionalised autobiography or an indictment of the Third Republic elite but forms an ironic supplement to the battle successes of L.S.M., the revolutionary general, as does O.'s narrative. Finally, as with O.'s narrative, it critiques a certain historical discourse, specifically that found in the academic 'manuels d'Histoire' (p. 107). Nevertheless, the cavalryman's story does not directly concern the representation of revolution in the text and Simon ignores him when drawing parallels between the two revolutionaries. For this reason, his character will not be dealt with in detail.

L.S.M. and O. are not simply revolutionaries, but also writers attempting retrospectively to remember and assign meaning to their past (1993, 167-68; Britton 1984, 430-31), as is the cavalryman. The text highlights intertextuality both formally and thematically. Its own construction interweaves, for example, (supposed) direct quotations from L.S.M.'s documents with his fictional story; and quotes/rewrites passages from *Homage*. In addition, there are numerous allusions to other texts - the most significant being Virgil's *Georgics* - and to the presence of either a writer and/or a reader.

One specific example is pp. 370-71, where the description of the new, revolutionary geography and of L.S.M.'s travels merges with the description of an actual historical document - L.S.M.'s register, structured less around a series of dates than a series of place-names. In turn, this memoir is conflated with historical writing in what Britton calls the objective or 'Benvenistian' mode of the (caricatural) 'manuel d'Histoire' (see below). On a stylistic level, by highlighting its own genre-blurring status, the text parodies the distanced, third-person, past tense form of the conventional history text or political biography (see Britton 1984, 428-29 & Roger 1988, 189). It reminds us that we are readers of a narrative whose historical referents were witnesses of momentous events. However, the poetic analogy of the rivers as 'les épicentres ou les lignes de force de quelque convulsion souterraine' also reminds us implicitly of the narrative's fictionality.

Secondly, the text highlights that its referents are, in fact, other texts. In this particular case, L.S.M.'s 'registres', in Part Four Orwell's *Homage*, in another instance the autobiographical text of Simon's Civil War and Second World War experiences, disseminated through the whole of his œuvre. The reference to an authentic historical document thus paradoxically doubly distances us from its referent. Indeed, the reference to L.S.M. reading the 'registres' emphasizes that the only access he, and we, have to his past - and by extension, to any past event - is through textual (or, more broadly, material,) evidence.³

In fact, 'the past' is never unproblematically present as such. The text shows the tentative nature of any reconstruction of past events; the material constraints such as the loss, and accidental or deliberate destruction, of documents, or the censorship which L.S.M.'s family, for example, exercise retrospectively on his memory (see pp. 147-51). In addition, there are 'internal' restraints on the narrative, questions of narrative perspective or bias, of selectiveness and reliability. These range from the role played by the writer's conscious and unconscious ideological and aesthetic prejudices to the lacunae and failures of memory that threaten the (ideal) totality of any account of the past. However, in *Les Géorgiques*, such inherently problematic factors affect not only fictional accounts, but also historical sources and discourse proper.⁴

Britton explores such issues in her analysis of the novel's discourse using Benveniste's distinction between *histoire* and *discours*. For Benveniste, *histoire* is discourse which attempts to 'obliterate all traces of its author'. It is characterised by impersonal factual statements; a lack of subjective impressions or value judgements and so on (see 1984, 423; 428). As such this (ideal) 'textual correlate of a perfect, non-polemical knowledge' (1984, 441) can be compared to the Sartrean image of prose writing as a transparent pane of glass onto the world in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*.

3. According to Roger the real historical documents - the supposed referent - appear in *Les Géorgiques* only as part of the fictional text, that is, as the product of a labour of writing rather than its source. In this sense, reference appears as a deferred effect of writing: 'la référence [...] vient après; et l'archive n'est pas faite pour être citée, mais phagocytée' (1988, 191-92).

4. Brewer reads the novel in terms of how it reveals and enacts 'the narrative conditions of legacy' (1995, 58). The novel foregrounds reading and writing in order to show how material traces of the past, such as L.S.M.'s archives, are 'not a privileged theory of the past to be handed down intact but rather the signs of divisions, dissimulations and diversions (*détournements*) from mainstream history' (1995, 62; see also 71).

Discours, on the other hand, is 'based on the [intersubjective] relation between producer and receiver' (Britton 1984, 423). This distinction allows the reader to focus on the textual traces of subjectivity by distinguishing between instances of language which relate to the *sujet de l'énoncé* (or 'S1'), and to the *sujet de l'énonciation* (or 'S2'). Britton argues that *Les Géorgiques* parodies the notion of *histoire* and foregrounds the heterogeneity of its own discourse, and it does so principally by establishing different relations between the S1 and S2 between and within the three narratives. In the cavalryman's case, there is no 'distance' or 'tension' between the S1 and S2, since it is an unproblematically autobiographical account. In L.S.M.'s story, S1 is L.S.M. and S2 'le garçon', L.S.M.'s descendant, trying imaginatively to reconstruct L.S.M.'s life on the basis of his papers. However, 'le garçon' is also an S1 in his own right. In O.'s narrative, the S1 is O. and the S2 is another, anonymous narrator who does not respect the documentary basis for the reconstruction of O.'s account, *Homage*.

Because the three narratives do not have the same S2, this creates a 'referential instability'. More significantly, it makes the S2 of O.'s story more problematic, as unlike the other S2s, he has no 'diegetic presence' in the novel (Britton 1984, 426). Britton argues that the S2s in the novel exist, in fact, only as a relation or perspective on the S1s, and this relation is one of *knowledge*. In the cavalryman's case, the knowledge of S1 and S2 is identical, but in L.S.M.'s story, the S2 knows less, thus has to use his imagination. In O.'s narrative, the S2's version corrects O.'s biased and incomplete story, becoming the authoritative discourse on *Homage*.

In the case of L.S.M.'s story, roman and italic scripts are at first used to distinguish two types of discourse - 'fact' or documentary evidence and 'non-fact' or imaginary sequences - but later this distinction is blurred. Thus 'vague and almost random speculation' on past events is mixed with 'precise circumstantial detail of how it (might have) happened'.⁵ L.S.M.'s story thus offers itself as 'an illusionist discourse which is constantly undermining itself by leaving traces of its own production' (1984, 428). In addition, the novel begins with an explicit parody of Benvenistian *histoire*, whose characteristic elements are exaggerated to caricatural and contradictory effect. For instance, the text

5. Similarly, in *La muchacha*, Marsé's fictional historian uses concrete realist notation to convince the reader of the truth value of fictional episodes in his memoirs; see Chapter Four.

mimics the brevity and repetitive structure of factual sentences, yet uses the present, not the past tenses of *histoire*, creating the sense of a series of ‘presents’ which subverts diachrony. Secondly, there is the ‘aspectual diversity’ of the subject matter of the sentences, and therefore the differing status of the information they contain (for more detail see Britton 1984, 429-30). Overall, this parodic technique subverts the authority of L.S.M.’s story.

Moreover, the later references to the S2 as an S1 foreground the relationship between ‘le garçon’ and L.S.M. as ‘an intertextual identification based on reading and writing’ (1984, 430-33). This identification, and the desire for knowledge that motivates it, distance L.S.M.’s narrative from *histoire*. This relationship is very different to that established between the S1 and S2 in O.’s story. The intertext, *Homage*, and the writer, Orwell, are never explicitly mentioned but function rather as a ‘negative referent’, as discussed below. Rather than being seen as a source of (hidden) knowledge, Orwell’s text is treated symptomatically by Simon, that is, as operating a form of censorship.

The Representation of Revolution: L.S.M.

In describing L.S.M. the novel uses, on the one hand, a triumphalist, Michelet-type discourse: L.S.M. is a colossus (‘l’homme-montagne’) or a ‘giant’ (p. 371)⁶ who participates in events of world-historical importance (see pp. 370-71).⁷ Unlike the cavalryman, he is a fully ‘historical’ subject, playing a decisive role in events, to the extent that he casts the deciding vote for the King’s execution. Yet, ultimately, he is history’s plaything. Although he rises to the status of general and dedicates his life to the realisation of his revolutionary ideals, it is at great personal cost (‘cette chose pour laquelle il avait tout laissé, tout risqué, versé son sang’, p. 383). In signing the proclamation against Royalist fugitives which will

6. This description plays both on L.S.M.’s stature (physical and political) and his affiliations to the Jacobins (or ‘montagnards’ because they occupied the highest seats in the Paris Convention). They favoured the King’s execution and opposed the Girondins’s attempts to curb the power of the Paris commune and the *sans-culottes*. See Hibbert 1980, 181; Cobb & Jones 1988, 183-86, and Roger 1988, 190.

7. In passing, it is worth relating the description of revolutionary France as substituting ‘de simples numéros attribués bientôt aux unités’ for ‘la vieille mosaïque de royaumes, d’électorats et d’évêchés’ (p. 371) to what Britton calls ‘the rearticulation of history onto geography’ in the text (1985, 96). That is, the Revolution is represented not in terms of its social and political effects, but primarily in topographical and geological terms.

eventually lead to his brother's execution, he even commits fratricide by proxy (see pp. 437-38; also Roger 1988, 182).

In addition, his life is spent in exile from the estate whose maintenance constantly preoccupies him, yet which he cannot enjoy (p. 377). His restlessness while alive is compared to the posthumous fate of his marble bust (pp. 243-44) in an image which conflates the trajectory of man and monument as one of ceaseless, repetitive and, by implication, futile ('Sisyphean') movement or 'interminable errance'; a motif discussed below. The descriptions of L.S.M.'s tireless services to the Republic are also tinged with irony since he gains personal wealth and power. The increasingly ostentatious dress of L.S.M.'s political masters (p. 244) suggests a gradual and generalised corruption of revolutionary ideals, and the reassertion of old inequalities, particularly with the advent of the Directory (see Hibbert 1980, 292). As with O., the text highlights the gap between L.S.M.'s professed ideals and his pragmatic choices, dictated by the political realities of the new Republic. The text ironically interpolates his reasons for preventing a properly democratic consultation on the fate of the King (*Les Géorgiques*, pp. 200-201; also Hibbert 1980, 185). In addition, his egalitarian theories do not extend to his personal life: his relationship with his servants remains paternalistic, even tyrannical (Batti is 'tyrannisée par lettres', p. 366); and he is not averse to using his connections to gain the release of the Royalist Adélaïde.

The overarching irony is that, ultimately, the figure who loomed so large over the fate of Europe is reduced to the impotent invalid on the terrace, overseeing a 'dérisoire domaine de quelques dizaines d'hectares' (pp. 367-69 and 472-73), and having long since abandoned any belief in revolutionary ideals (p. 222). This parallels his own double abandonment, by the state to which he has dedicated his energies, and by his family (because of his twin crimes of regicide and fratricide; see pp. 150; 192-94; 381 & 438).

The fate of L.S.M., the revolutionary, is thus deeply intertwined with that of his fugitive royalist brother: in fact, they are 'doubles'. The main enigma of L.S.M.'s story, and thus what underpins the construction of its hermeneutic code concerns 'the secret of the brother' (Britton 1984, 432). L.S.M.'s triumph is always already inhabited by the latter's tragic fate, and the decline in his professional and personal fortunes dates from their secret meeting. Their

ideological conflict is represented as archetypal, a microcosmic reflection of the trajectory of the Revolution, represented primarily in terms of social division, betrayal and death. L.S.M.'s fate is exemplary because it reveals the misguided nature of his utopian ideals and of his attempts to 'make' history. He is defeated by circumstances, by time, by his own mortality, but also by 'History', now represented as an impersonal, yet deeply ironic force, working through humans, yet indifferent to their values and suffering (see pp. 435-37; also 169).⁸ In addition, Fiona Cox sees the story of L.S.M. as reworking the Orpheus myth, in that he is another liminal figure who 'having lost his [first] wife to the powers of death [...] is unable to re-enter the world of the living' (see Cox 1999, 182-3).

On pp. 370-71, the Revolution entails the complete destruction of a state of affairs that has existed 'depuis des millénaires'. However, as with the Spanish Revolution, this radical historical break, and its accompanying revolutionary ideology, rapidly degenerates into a sordid power struggle. Ultimately, it leads to the Terror and, finally, in reaction, to the reversal of revolutionary reform embodied by the Directory and the rise of Bonaparte (see Hibbert 1980, 221-88). Thus the divisions and betrayals within L.S.M.'s family are projected onto the macrocosmic level of the fate of the nation. The most explicit description of the charnel-house atmosphere reigning in revolutionary Paris is given on L.S.M.'s return from Corsica and repeats the images used to describe Barcelona in *Le Palace*:

8. In the passage on pp. 435-37, '10 Août' probably refers to the march on the Tuileries in 1792, when the palace was attacked and overrun by the *sans-culottes*, marking the radicalization of the revolution, with the imprisonment of the King and the rise of Danton. See Hibbert 1980, 133-62. Apart from the characterisation of history as an 'impitoyable' force, this passage also, as in O.'s story, psychologizes the different political and historical choices made by O., his brother and his wife.

comme si [...] il avait brusquement pénétré à l'intérieur non d'une ville mais d'une sorte de champ clos, de pourrissoir où dans une puanteur de sang croupi [...] achevaient de s'entretuer, exténués, furieux, vieillis de dix ans, réduits à l'état de parodiques fantômes [...] les derniers représentants de ce qui avait autrefois constitué comme un club, un cercle fermé aux statuts non sur la fortune ou la naissance mais sur l'intelligence, la générosité, le courage [...] paralysés de peur, d'épuisement [...] se mettant comme des voyous ou des naufragés à dix pour étrangler le onzième [...] comme si pendant son absence l'*Histoire* avait divergé, s'était insensiblement dédoublée, se poursuivant d'un côté au grand jour, à visage découvert et à coups de canon, de l'autre obligée de s'inventer, hors de toute règle connue, tâtonnant [...] perdant pied soudain, s'affolant alors [...] tournant à la parodie, au bouffon: un de ces films projetés à l'accélééré, avec ses foules, ses personnages ataxiques [...] l'invisible metteur en scène pressé d'en finir, accablé par les redites d'une pièce cent fois jouée, laissant à peine aux acteurs le temps de lancer leur réplique, faisant déjà signe aux suivants, tyrans, despotes pour un mois, une semaine, un jour, morts le soir d'après [...] déjà rejetées dans le passé, condamnés, l'*Histoire* s'éloignant déjà, abandonnant leurs cadavres sans têtes, le monstre acéphale n'en finissant plus d'agoniser [...] les jours se succédant dans une paradoxale monotonie, avec leurs successions de tourtueuses et monotones machinations de police, les monotones complots [...] le temps à la fois statique et emballé, l'*Histoire* se mettant à tourner sur place [...] avec de brusques retours en arrière, d'imprévisibles crochets, errant sans but, entraînant tout ce qui se trouvait à la portée de cette espèce de tourbillon, le happant lui-même au passage (pp. 383-87, my italics)

Two interlinked metaphors are used to describe the 'ten years' referring roughly to the period from the meeting of the Estates General in 1789 to the *coup d'état* by Napoleon in 1799. Firstly, the idea of history as chronological progression towards a utopian goal is subverted by its being represented not as a single, straight line, but as a line that diverges, doubles back, contains blips and repetitions. As in *Le Palace*, the Revolution and the reaction to it are likened to a 'tourbillon', an image of violent, but ultimately sterile movement, embodying both dynamism and circular closure, like L.S.M.'s easeless wanderings across Europe. The Revolution fails to carry on reinventing itself and becomes ensnared in past structures and gestures. A frenetic *bouleversement* of the political and social system, it is ultimately 'sans fin', both in the sense that it 'loses its head' and loses all direction, ending with the imposition of another absolutism under Bonaparte.

Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, the Revolution is compared to a hackneyed drama ('une pièce cent fois jouée'). This image, combined with the

cinematic image of a speeded-up film, again conveys the sense of manic but meaningless movement. Through its internal power-struggles and resultant despotism, the Revolution becomes a parody of itself: as a discourse it loses its authentic content, its actors mimicking formerly heroic, now empty gestures. However, because of its very repetitiveness this failure, rather than being represented as tragedy, or as horror, resembles rather a farce. By force of repetition, even those who wield power become an indistinguishable series of 'despotes pour [...] un jour', and even totalitarianism becomes 'monotone'.

The representation of the Revolution as an empty farce can be related to Marx's characterisation of the 1848 Revolution in his 'Eighteenth Brumaire' as the merely formalistic aping of an original, fully meaningful event (1789). Prendergast discusses the treatment of the 1848 revolution in *L'Education sentimentale*, claiming Flaubert's text can be read as:

a model avant-la-lettre of the revisionist way with the French revolutionary legacy: against the epic registers of Michelet and Hugo. In Flaubert we have history as all fracture and debacle, and revolution either as horror story [...] or [...] as no story at all, at least as no Story in the manner of revolutionary 'great narrative' criticized by Lyotard. (1992, 239)⁹

However, in the above passage from *Les Géorgiques*, the notion of a shadow without a substance is applied to 1789 itself: paradoxically, the hollow repetition/farce is already latent in the original event (see also Duncan 1994, 137-38). Cox points out that Simon's constant intertextual references to the [Orpheus] myth also signal 'the impossibility of escaping from acting, of reliving stories' (1999, 188). Ultimately, 'Simon's world is [...] one in which absurdity reigns and the writing and rewriting of texts and scripts represents nothing more than the perpetuation of futility' (ibid). This seems to underpin a (retrospective) process of narrative closure regarding the outcome and significance of revolution and political *engagement* (in marked contrast to the open-ended, indeterminate

9. In fact, as will be discussed later, Prendergast argues that *L'Education sentimentale* is more complex in its representation of 1848. The representation of revolution as either empty farce and/or horror story (metaphors also used by Simon) form part of an anti-heroic, anti-triumphalist discourse on revolution which Flaubert's novel reveals to be just as endoxal as the romantic-republican paradigm it opposes.

narrative on 1848 Prendergast identifies with *L'Education sentimentale*). This point is discussed further below.

In contrast, Philippe Roger argues that *Les Géorgiques* generates 'l'effet Révolution française'. In representing L.S.M. positively, the text counters Simon's previously pessimistic representations of revolution, which also has consequences for the text's representation of history. O. is the only soldier in the text associated with a disastrous experience of military and political defeat in Spain, according to Roger, who asserts that O.'s differentiation from L.S.M., and his representation as 'l'exemplaire cocu de l'*Histoire*' is also signalled on a formal level by the typographic conventions used to introduce the three protagonists (1988, 194-95). Thus, both thematically and typographically, O. marks a point of divergence in the text with L.S.M., just as, on an intertextual level, there is a biographical variation between the earlier and later versions of L.S.M. The effect of this in the text is to re-dynamize a historical process that was previously conceived of in Simon's novels as lacking any forward movement.

However, Roger's reading is too positive and underplays both the thematic and formal continuities between Simon's representation of the French and Spanish Revolutions (and the experiences of L.S.M. and O.), and the inter-textual continuities between his representation of revolution in *Les Géorgiques* and in earlier texts. Indeed, while arguing that the text 're-dynamises' Simon's representation of history, he states that this movement should not be confused with a notion of linear progress towards a utopian state. In addition, he comments that the novel seems to advocate a mood of 'acquiescement' or stoical acceptance of historical disaster, in particular, of the disastrous Spanish revolution (1988, 195). However, it is true that, although the content of its representation of revolution is actually very similar to *Le Palace*, unlike the latter, *Les Géorgiques* also expounds an alternative vision of the motors of history, as is explored in the final section.

The Representation of Revolution: O. and the Rewriting of *Homage to Catalonia*

Orr argues that Orwell and *Homage* are used as an intertext in *Les Géorgiques* in distinct ways. Principally, O. is 'decoupled' from the historical character of Orwell/Blair, since what is most pertinent to the construction and thematics of the narrative is the (universalising) comparison made between the experiences of L.S.M. and O. (1993, 167). However, in Part IV, a much tighter form of intertextual reference begins. The quotation/rewriting of passages from *Homage* and lack of references to L.S.M. reveals a shift to a specific identification of O. with the historical figure of Orwell. This identification is needed to differentiate between the experiences of Simon's O. and those of Orwell, establishing the latter as the target of the ensuing critique. Although, as Britton points out, the identity of O. and Orwell is left implicit and is posed as an enigma within the text (see 1984, 439).

What is at stake in the (non-)identification of O. with Orwell? Orr argues O. is distanced from Orwell, firstly, because we are dealing with a discursive construct, and, moreover, a fictional one: O. thus cannot 'be' Orwell who, in turn, must be distinguished from the real Eric Blair. However, saying 'O. is a character in a novel' only sidesteps the real question: if this character and the narrative of his exploits are not dependent on a referential link with Orwell, then why the incorporation and rewriting of passages from *Homage*? Why call the narrator 'O.' as opposed to 'P.'? In fact, Orr recognises that Simon's critique is essentially dependent on the reader making a close identification between O.'s Civil War narrative and *Homage*, at least in Part IV.

Moreover, while Orr is correct in distinguishing two uses of Orwell as an intertext, this distinction underplays the universalising tendency still at work in Part IV. O. remains a particular case of a general phenomenon – the *engagé* intellectual whose theoretical espousal of revolution is disproved by experience. In the Pugh interview, Simon offers a reading of *Homage* in terms of the disappointment of revolutionary ideals or the 'collapse of illusions'. However, this is a circular move: what is represented as a universal phenomenon is in fact

dependent on a particular interpretation of a particular case, Orwell's experiences in the revolutionary Barcelona of 1936-37.

Another complementary approach is to consider O.'s narrative in relation to Bourdieu's notion of the 'symbolic violence' which specialist discourses like philosophy - or, here, literature - perform on ordinary language. That is, to ask whether Simon's text, as the production of a certain literary discourse, overtly negates the historical and textual presence of Orwell yet maintains it in a (more or less) sublimated form as what Bourdieu calls a 'negative referent'. This allows Simon both to critique Orwell and the literary and political position Orwell is taken to represent, while at the same time asserting that, as a literary production, his text is not - primarily, at least - an ideological intervention.

In 'Censorship and the Imposition of Form', Bourdieu discusses Heidegger's philosophical vocabulary as a particularly acute case of the symbolic violence exercised by philosophical discourse in general (1991, 137-59).¹⁰ Bourdieu's assertion that, once a process of negation of the ordinary (vulgar) sense of words or the relations between them has been effected, the negation on the tabooed meaning/relation can even be lifted (1991, 145-46) sheds interesting light on the relation of O. to Orwell. Bourdieu's reading, firstly, avoids making a (false) distinction between the content and the expression or form of a particular symbolic production. Secondly, the 'distinction' of a particular discursive form (here, 'high' literary discourse) is no proof against its ideological effects. In

10. Bourdieu distinguishes between specialist discourses such as philosophy and scientific language proper. While the former produce the illusion of being independent, they are, in fact, dependent on ordinary language. Such specialist discourses result from a compromise between: (i) expressive interest (defined as biological drive or political interest in its broadest sense) and; (ii) the censorship which is structural to the field in which the particular discourse (here, philosophy) operates. For Bourdieu, 'censorship' is constitutive of particular discourses, since it involves the internalisation of norms of expression (and reception) - 'strategies of euphemisation' - which make the productions of a particular discourse recognisable as such (1991, 137-39). Specialist discourses involve 'the rhetoric of the false break' (p. 140). For instance, Heidegger's philosophical discourse transforms ordinary language, firstly, by creating ' [...] a system of philosophical concepts [...], "technical words" which are ennobled forms of ordinary words' (1991, 141). Words thus lose their social identity and primary meaning via an 'elementary form of euphemization' (1991, 142). This is essentially ideological since it masks, as much as reveals, 'the primitive experiences of the social world and the social phantasms which are its source' (1991, 143). More significant is the double nature of this negation: the negated, primary meaning of the tabooed word in ordinary language is not erased but remains available in latent form, although misrecognised in practice. This allows the expression of the social phantasms by imposing a form that suggests they are not being said. Bourdieu's example from Heidegger is his use of the oppositional terms 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' as a way of reintroducing the political opposition between the 'elite' and the 'masses' (1991, 143).

general terms, this allows one to foreground the question of the social determinations of form - a question which formalist analyses (what Bourdieu calls 'internal readings') of such productions (here, Simon's texts) relegate to one of, at best, secondary interest.

Simon's discourse, it can be argued, performs symbolic violence on Orwell and his texts. Firstly, it elides the link between O. and Orwell, and also asserts that his own fictionalised discourse on the Spanish Revolution is to be judged differently from other genres (such as *reportage* or historical accounts proper). But at the same time, Orwell and his discourse on intellectual *engagement* serve as the negative referent which grounds Simon's own oppositional discourse on *engagement*. A close reading of *Homage* reveals a complex relationship of difference between Orwell and Simon's O. that largely involves rewriting or erasing the emotional and political significance Orwell attributes to his experiences. Simon's discourse is universalising - or, as Bourdieu would have it, ontologising - since it involves negating both the specificity of Orwell's particular experience of political *engagement* and also the 'social phantasms' of a particular historical moment which are masked/revealed in Simon's discourse.

Simon's narrative is dependent on the recognition of its more or less sublimated references to a specific place and time (revolutionary Barcelona in Winter/Spring 1936-37), and to a specific cultural discourse of political *engagement*. This is the generalised discourse of 'Marxism' alluded to in the text and, more specifically, the intellectual discourse of the fellow-travelling Left of the thirties of which Orwell and his texts are supposedly representative. However, the latter may reflect more Simon's own post-war intellectual milieu than the actual context and content of Orwell's real-life commitments.

Of course, in attempting to re-translate literary discourse back to 'its smallest expression', there is the danger of being reductive. Bourdieu's response, in his critique of Heidegger, is that a reductive reading performs a necessary violence to counteract 'the symbolic violence' performed both by Heidegger's writing and the received critical discourse on it (1991, 151-59). Simon's representation of Orwell may be complex and overdetermined, yet to claim that the text is ultimately 'the yardstick of its own comprehension' (p. 155) is to run the risk of colluding with 'academic aristocratism' (p. 151).

How, then, does O.'s narrative compare with the original text of *Homage*? It opens with the description of a photograph of a trainload of militiamen leaving for the front. The next forty-five pages (pp. 263-308) consist of a rewriting of events described in *Homage*, and can be divided roughly into three episodes. Firstly, O. on the run in Barcelona (incorporating elements from Chapters 11 and 12 of *Homage*). Secondly, life at the front (mainly the night attack from Chapter 6 of *Homage*, but incorporating elements from Chapters 2-6). Thirdly, the May street-fighting (Chapter 9 of *Homage*).

According to John Fletcher, the incidents Simon takes from Orwell's text are those which are most 'visual', 'graphic', and 'action-packed' (1985, 104). Part of Simon's rewriting consists in imaginatively expanding the lyrical and dramatic possibilities eschewed by Orwell's deliberately restrained prose by adding descriptive (especially visual) detail. The description of the baths on pp. 271-72 (p. 169 of *Homage*) expands what in the Orwell is merely the briefest of allusions into a half-page description. It also represents the baths as a place for furtive homosexual encounters, thus presumably ironising what is seen as the piety of Orwell's text. This tone of mocking irony characterises Simon's relation of O.'s experiences overall: apart from the salacious reference to the baths there are, for instance, allusions to brothels as potential hiding places for the fugitives (pp. 263 and 270).

An example of the poetic effects generated by adding detail is Simon's description of the dawn sky at the end of the night attack (p. 292; see *Homage*, p. 76). Orwell's description of the chaos and confusion of the attack is given apocalyptic overtones (*Les Géorgiques*, pp. 289-91). Simon also uses Flaubertian *style indirect libre* to flesh out O.'s thoughts and feelings so as to make them almost indistinguishable from comments by an anonymous narrator (the S2) on the action.

The dramatic or lyrical potential of an incident is not the only principle of selection operating, as is shown by the text's chronological order, which disrupts that of *Homage*. Simon's narrative is organised mainly around the urban setting of Barcelona, focusing on those incidents concerning the divisions in the Popular Front and the crushing of the POUM. Part IV opens with O. forced into hiding during the purge (the final sequence of *Homage*), and ends with the May events. Only the central thirteen pages are dedicated to life at the front - and most of that

to the night attack - whereas in *Homage*, just over half the text (7 out of 12 chapters) recounts Orwell's experiences in the militia.

In O.'s story, even when the actual details coincide, the tone and the interpretation is very different to Orwell's. The first episode stresses that the hunted men are reduced to the status of animals (see pp. 264 & 266), their only thoughts of physical survival. More significant are the references during O.'s trip to the barber's shop to the revolutionary posters (pp. 270-71). In *Homage*, these 'anarchist notices' (p. 4) are one sign of the truly revolutionary state of affairs in late December 1936. The fact that practices such as tipping have reappeared when Orwell returns in late April 1937 is interpreted as a sign that the revolutionary period is over (see *Homage*, pp. 92-93). While on the run, Orwell comments that he feels like 'telling the barbers that their chains would soon be back on' (p. 168). In O.'s narrative this comment is expanded as follows:

progrès que dans la méconnaissance relative de la langue dont les étrangers étaient en droit de se prévaloir ils pouvaient feindre d'ignorer, le barbier sans doute lui aussi incapable (mais peut-être était-il analphabète?) de saisir le sens et d'apprécier le pouvoir libérateur de l'affichette, de sorte que tout se passait pour le mieux dans les restaurants de luxe qu'il était bon de fréquenter [...] aucune prescription philosophique ou métaphysique ne s'opposant dans aucun pays et sous aucun régime à ce que les clients vêtus de pantalons de flanelle [...] jouissent, même au milieu d'une population misérable, des privilèges que confère l'argent généreusement dépensé, quelles que puissent être son origine et son odeur. (pp. 270-71)

This can be read as aping Orwell's own style in commenting on the ease with which the old class divisions are resurrected. However, the allusion to the universal power of money implies that the barber and his fellow 'slaves' are, in fact, opportunistic - or even indifferent - to what are merely rhetorical assertions of social equality. An ironic distance is established from Orwell's apparently naive belief that 'human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine' (*Homage*, p. 4). Orwell's belief system is thus reduced to '[des] prescription[s] philosophique[s] ou métaphysique[s]' and further ironised by the suggestion that, when in personal danger, he is prepared to suspend his scruples regarding tipping.

Style indirect libre is consistently used to establish ironic distance: another example is the description of the prison visit and O.'s attempts to get his

superior's letter released (pp. 273-79). Compared with the Kopp incident in *Homage* (pp. 171-78), there is a small but significant difference. O.'s attempts to obtain Kopp's release are motivated by 'quelque chose (de quelque nom qu'on l'appelle: âme, esprit, raison, honneur....) sinon à convaincre tout au moins à racheter, même au risque de cette vie que le consul s'employait à sauver' (p. 273). In addition, the appeals O. makes to the Popular Army officer are based on abstract notions such as 'la raison, le bon droit, la justice'. In *Homage*, however, Orwell strategically appeals to more pragmatic considerations such as 'the urgency of Kopp's mission to the front' (p. 175).

Finally, there are the thoughts ascribed to O. on hearing he is a wanted man:

Il sut que tous ses problèmes, philosophiques ou autres, étaient annulés d'un coup, et même résolus, sauf un: fuir et se cacher, seul, mal remis d'une blessure, dans une ville étrangère [...] et qui, donc, (la métamorphose), rendait futile toute notion de légalité et illégalité (comme le lui avait raconté quelqu'un à qui, en d'autre temps, la chose était arrivée, c'est à dire l'irruption [...] chez lui d'hommes qui [...] avait simplement intimé l'ordre de débarrasser les lieux, sans même non plus se donner la peine de rire lorsqu'il avait posé [...] le même absurde pourquoi [que O.] - à la suite de quoi il (celui qu'on avait chassé de chez lui) avait compris ce que d'ordinaire les gens ont quelque peine à admettre, à savoir que le droit n'est pas une question de morale ou de justice discutée par des philosophes et appliquée par des parlements ou des assemblées mais, en fait, une simple affaire de conventions et que la seule légalité conforme à la nature des choses consiste à posséder un revolver en face de quelqu'un qui n'en possède pas. (pp. 266-67)

O.'s sudden revelation concerns the inadequacy and naivety of his previous, abstract conceptions of justice and the rule of law, which the narrator implies are the product of a sheltered, intellectual existence. Now, O. realises that justice is not the 'natural' order of things, and that, after Hobbes, the only real law ('la nature des choses') is the law of the strongest. As is discussed in the section 'The Other Orwell' below, these are not Orwell's conclusions in *Homage*.

In *Les Géorgiques*, the narratorial dig at abstract notions of justice is followed by a description of the police raid on Orwell's hotel room (see also pp. 178-79 of *Homage*). The significant difference is the interpretation put on the fact that the policemen do not turn O.'s wife out of bed in order to search it in

Simon's narrative. For Simon: 's'ils n'avaient pas jeté la femme à coups de pied hors de son lit et ne l'avaient pas emmenée, c'était bien évidemment dans l'espoir de se servir d'elle comme d'un appeau' (p. 269). In *Homage*, Orwell also refers to such dirty tricks being used in the purge - for instance, that the wives of POUM members being arrested to serve as hostages. However, while recognising that his wife is being used as 'a decoy duck' (p. 164), he interprets the failure to turn her out of bed as an example of 'the flashes of magnanimity that you get from Spaniards even in the worst of circumstances' (p. 178). This point is important, since it epitomises a significant strand of the discourse of *Homage*, namely Orwell's generally positive attitude to Spain and the Spanish, a point discussed further below. The omission of the handshake between Orwell and the officer during the Kopp incident as described in O.'s narrative is also symptomatic of this kind of erasure.

In marked contrast to *Homage*, the representation of Spain in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*, is overwhelmingly negative. This very different vision also structures the closing sequence of the section, when O. and his companions escape from Spain and spend a few days in a French seaside town (Banyuls in *Homage*). It ends with their sitting on a pebble beach, beneath grey skies, watching a sea littered with rubbish and rotting food - an image of overwhelming desolation and disillusionment.

O.'s experiences at the front are described in an anti-heroic style, as are Orwell's in *Homage*, stressing the deprivations undergone by the ordinary soldier: the lack of proper equipment and training, the cold, the poor quality of the rations and the lice (see *Homage*, p. 18).¹¹ It also stresses the soldiers' boredom and inaction, quoting Orwell's description of 'the English' view of the war as 'a bloody pantomime', translated in *Les Géorgiques* as 'une pantomime avec effusion de sang' (p. 284).¹² However, O.'s narrative also suggests he enlists because of a romantic notion that he is participating in a metaphysical struggle between good and evil, a vision frustrated and contradicted by the daily irritations and passivity of trench warfare:

11. Compare for example *Les Géorgiques* pp. 280-81 and 283-84 with *Homage*, pp. 43, 49-50, 52 & 58. See also Fletcher 1985, 104-5.

12. This description is presumably taken from the French translation of *Homage: La Catalogne libre*. It seems to have missed the double sense of the English 'bloody', which in the original could also be used as a colloquial intensifier, i.e. to express exasperation rather than to allude

Lui, l'ange ou l'archange exterminateur qui avait fait tant de chemin non pas seulement pour racheter des siècles de débauche et d'iniquité, comme il était écrit dans le Livre dont son enfance avait été nourrie, mais encore obéir à l'autre Bible, dont à son tour, son adolescence avait été nourrie, œuvre d'un autre Moïse, tout aussi barbu, quoique sans cornes et revêtu d'un complet-veston, issu toutefois du même vieux peuple que ses prédécesseurs, perfectionnant en quelque sorte le dieu exigeant, sévère et législateur qu'ils avaient façonné. (p. 283)

The analogy drawn between the Bible and Marx's writings (in particular *Capital*) prefigures the comparison of Marxism in the thirties to the nineteenth century Oxford Movement. Simon uses both these parallels to denounce Orwell's *engagement* as essentially religious in nature.¹³ However, as well as equating Marxism with Christianity, Simon's ironic narrative stresses the abstract idealism and, indeed, sentimentality of O.'s *engagement*. The figure of 'l'ange exterminateur' crops up again in the attack on the fascist dugout, where O. is comically described chasing the fascist who supposedly personifies 'l'Iniquité en fuite' - in reality 'un pauvre diable [...] enrôlé de force' (p. 290).

The allusion to O.'s romanticised vision of the forces involved in the Civil War fits uneasily with the description of conditions on the Aragon front in *Homage*. Orwell remarks at one point that 'it was not bad fun in a Boy Scoutish way' (p. 39). After he is wounded, he also describes the colourful sight of a troop-train full of Italian volunteers as being 'like an allegorical picture of war [:] reviving that pernicious feeling, so difficult to get rid of, that war is glorious after all' (p. 145).¹⁴ Moreover, he does see the War, if not as a metaphysical struggle, then, at least, as an ethical one. He says that initially he was unaware of the political differences among the Republicans, and principally envisaged the war in 'naively idealistic' (p. 132) terms as part of a general anti-fascist struggle (see pp. 188-89 and 200). Nevertheless, in Chapters 2 to 7 and 10, Orwell's depiction of conditions at the front is hardly romantic, and the appendices constitute a

to the loss of life.

13. There is no evidence in either the authorised biography of Orwell by Shelden or the earlier biography by Crick, firstly, that Orwell's childhood was notable for its religious instruction and, secondly, that he discovered Marxism in his adolescence, nor indeed was at any point a Marxist. On the first point, see Shelden 19991, Chapters 1-3; on the second, see Crick 1981, xiv-xv. Simon's misrepresentation of Orwell is discussed below.

14. See also, however, his self-reflexive comment on the send-off given to the militia column departing for the Front ('the conquering-hero stuff', p. 12).

dismantling of his original anti-fascist position - although for different reasons, and with a different conclusion, to *Les Géorgiques*. These points are discussed in more detail below.

Apart from suggesting that O. sees himself as an anti-fascist crusader, the description of the night attack also suggests that, in trying to play the hero, O. is repressing his real feelings of fear (pp. 285-86). Orwell does indeed remark as they are crossing no-man's land that he feels no fear, only 'a tremendous, hopeless longing to get over the intervening ground' (*Homage*, p. 66). However, he comments at other points on his fear under fire (p. 44) and, after the first fighting, describes 'feeling a deep horror at everything' (p. 73). In *Les Géorgiques*, this sense of horror provoked by the noise and the fighting becomes an apocalyptic unleashing of cosmic forces (p. 289).

Orwell's narrative stresses the confused execution and inconclusive result of the attack. In *Les Géorgiques*, as in *Homage*, the episode ends with O. and his companions returning to their trenches: however, it omits Orwell volunteering to return and look for their missing companions. In *Homage*, any incidents revealing Orwell's bravery, or even heroism, are either debunked or presented in a matter-of-fact manner. In *Les Géorgiques*, they are represented as being symptomatic of O.'s deluded, romantic vision of the war (as with the letter incident) or simply omitted (as in this case).

The last episode reworked into O.'s narrative is the streetfighting of 3-5 May. Orwell refers to the 'strangeness' of the May events when 'the whole huge town of a million people was locked in a sort of violent inertia, a nightmare of noise without movement' - an image Simon borrows directly (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 303). Orwell also emphasises the confused nature and perception of the fighting (*Homage*, p. 111). Much of the subjective-realist detail in O.'s narrative is intended to convey poetically the existential experience of the chaos of these few days. If we compare the description of the theatre on pp. 105-6 of *Homage* with pp. 293-95 of *Les Géorgiques*, the fact that O.'s account does not stick to the chronological order of *Homage* reinforces this tone. Orwell's account ends with an impressionistic list of 'sudden glimpses of non-combatants, to whom the events were simply a meaningless uproar' (pp. 129-30). *Les Géorgiques* includes these on pp. 305-6 but adds the sudden opening of the market, the description of

the censored newspapers and the dinner of a single sardine from earlier in Chapter 9 (*Homage*, pp. 120 and 122).¹⁵

However, most of the authorial comments refer to O.'s discomfort and frustration (for instance p. 296). It is also suggested ironically in relation to the Assault Guards that the government's success is due not to any political skill or ideological superiority, but to the fact that its soldiers have enough food and sleep. Again, this kind of ultra-materialist discourse acts not just as a counter-balance to an over-idealised view of events, but relegates to second place political and philosophical ideas. Moreover, as the sardonic reference to 'actions historiques' (p. 296) shows, such comments underline the gap between the retrospective transparency conferred on such events by their insertion into a (heroic) narrative - presumably one like *Homage* - and O.'s inability to make sense of events as they unfold. O. finally renounces any attempt to make sense of his experiences:

Maintenant il avait simplement par-dessus la tête de toute cette Histoire dont il doutait (en quoi il se trompait encore) qu'elle méritât qu'on l'écrivît avec un H majuscule et qui ne l'intéressait décidément pas [...] il lui semblait de moins en moins probable qu'il participât à une action historique: en tout cas, si action il y avait, elle paraissait sous une forme bruyante certes, et tapageuse, de non-action, à moins d'admettre (ce qui était après tout possible mais peu exaltant) que l'Histoire se manifeste (s'accomplit) par l'accumulation de faits insignifiants, sinon dérisoires. (pp. 303-4)

This passage is analysed further below in relation to the novel's rejection of historical meta-narratives. 'Histoire' seems to involve, firstly, a notion of human agents actively participating in or 'making' history. Secondly, it denotes a narrative model which confers meaning on events (turning them into 'actions historiques') by arranging them into a causal sequence, and representing them as intelligible in terms of a grand design. Simon's rewriting highlights the problems with this view, namely the disparity between the existential experience of events and any retrospective account of them. For O., the fighting is essentially

15. The analogy made in *Les Géorgiques* (p. 293) between the home-made bombs Orwell describes in *Homage* (p. 106) and the Republican government ('de fabrication plus ou moins artisanale') adds to this impression. This metaphor for the Republic's makeshift political arrangements is later expanded into a ironic comment on the confused fighting which draws on a *marxisant* vocabulary of the stages of development of the means of production (p. 302).

‘bruyante’ and ‘tapageuse’. Rather than being a historical agent, he feels like a pawn in a series of seemingly random and inscrutable events. The inevitable gap between his subjective experience of the events and any analysis in terms of wider social or political dynamics is then opposed to O.’s theoretical (Marxist) view of the historical process.

Obviously such a view of the nature of historical experience also implies a view of the efficacy of political action. Referring to Simon’s reaction to his experiences in Spain, Britton says:

The hiatus between a particular street battle at a particular time and place and the generalized abstraction of ‘the Spanish Civil War’ creates a kind of opacity which for Simon devalues the whole concept of political action. Revolution is an inevitably futile attempt to alter the course of history, which [...] does not advance or progress but goes round in circles - cycles of oppression, exploitation and violence. (Britton 1993, p. 3)

The question of the nature of these cycles and what drives them is discussed further below. However, it is worth pointing out that Orwell himself commented explicitly on the disparity between any retrospective analysis of the May fighting and his real-time experience:

When you are taking part in events like these you are, I suppose, in a small way, making history, and you ought by rights to feel like a historical character. But you never do, because at such times the physical details always outweigh everything else. Throughout the fighting I never made the correct ‘analysis’ of the situation that was so glibly made by journalists hundreds of miles away. What I was chiefly thinking about was not the rights and wrongs of this miserable internicine scrap, but simply the discomfort and boredom of sitting day and night on that intolerable roof, and the hunger which was growing worse [...] If this was history it did not feel like it. (pp. 120-21)

The failure to represent accurately Orwell’s views on such matters is explored below. However, the next section will analyse the explicitly critical comments on O.’s (Orwell’s) revolutionary beliefs and his writing made in *Les Géorgiques*.

Orwell and the Critique of *engagement*

The beginning of Part IV alludes to Lytton Strachey's biographical sketch of Cardinal Manning (see Strachey 1948, 11-128). An implicit parallel is drawn between the crisis of religious faith experienced by Manning's followers in the mid-nineteenth century and the crisis of revolutionary faith O. (and the category of committed intellectuals he represents) undergoes. The equation of Marxism as a body of theoretical writings with Christian doctrine is a critical commonplace designed to draw attention to the fact that Marxism does not have the epistemological status of a science. In other words, it is not an objective mode of economic and social analysis, but another transcendental belief system ultimately based on the acceptance of articles of faith or dogma.

Simon is also (ironically) comparing Manning's self-belief with the unquestioning Marxism or fellow travelling of the upper-middle class English Left of the thirties (p. 308). The references to 'l'ordre de la Providence' and to Manning's belief in the predestination of the Oxford Movement are obviously intended as critical analogies with orthodox Hegelian-Marxist beliefs in the 'world-historical process'. Duffy reads such ironic allusions to laws - providential or historical - in Simon's texts as one element in a generalized attack on teleological narratives constructed around an essentially 'Judeo-Christian' concept of progress (1987, 428).

A more specific analogy could be between the sectarianism O. witnesses in Spain and the theological schisms within the Church of England a hundred years previously. The adherents of the Oxford Movement had a sense of historic mission, seeing themselves as an elite chosen to 'save' the Christian faith by uncovering its (perverted, yet paradoxically still intact) 'true' essence (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 309). The divisions among the Marxist Left both during and after the Civil War - in particular, the Trotskyist belief that the 'true' essence of Marxism had been perverted by Stalinism - would echo this.

It is important not to overlay the notion that O. is represented as undergoing a political awakening. In *Les Géorgiques*, despite his experiences in Barcelona, O. remains the more or less willing dupe of a misguided revolutionary politics. In fact, his narrative status is that of a 'type'. As in *Le Palace*, the text

uses descriptive detail not only to connote character, but also to generate an ideological effect. O., back in England, is conscious - to an almost paranoid extent - of the expectations of his readership. This readership is described as follows:

composé de personnages qui sont à quelques variantes près comme autant de copies de lui-même, coulés dans le même moule de cette éducation rigoriste et puritaine peuplant les collèges et les bâtiments gothiques et couverts de lierre de vieilles universités de jeunes gens dégingandés et osseux, pourvus de chevelures d'étaupe, aux dents légèrement proéminentes, aux lèvres toujours légèrement entrouvertes comme s'ils éprouvaient quelque difficulté à respirer à la suite de végétations mal soignées ou de l'écrasement d'une cloison nasale par quelque coup de crosse de hockey [...] plus tard sous les jets brûlants des douches [...] les longs corps laiteux, semés de taches de son, fantomatiques dans les nuages de vapeur fade, comme quelque allégorie préraphaélite de la chair vulnérable et fragile habitée d'une coriace et inflexible détermination. (p. 315)

The physical appearance of this sub-group is a symptom of their mentality, and crude psycho-biographical comments are used to render suspect their ethical and political beliefs. Their unattractive, ascetic appearance connotes the rigours and repressions of English public school and university life, and is seen as the key to their adult involvement with revolutionary Left politics. Their emotional coldness is metonymically revealed in the monasticism of their rooms and also manifested in their discourse, with its abstract vocabulary (see pp. 326-28). A direct and determining link is thus made between political commitment and emotional repression. On p. 317, they are described as 'capables d'une dureté envers eux-mêmes inversement proportionnelle à leur romantisme', thus their political beliefs are invalidated, like those of the stepfather in *Le Sacre*, whose youthful *engagement* is represented as the result of a bourgeois guilt complex. Allusions to the studied shabbiness of their clothes (pp. 315 & 326-28) are intended to connote a similar overcompensation: as in *Le Palace*, bad dress connotes bad politics.¹⁶ Thus the text represents the Marxism of O. and his contemporaries as the inevitable outcome of the emotional damage caused them by a puritanical

16. Also worth highlighting is the perjorative reference to their 'visages de filles' (p. 326), drawing on a misogynistic discourse of traditional gender divisions in which intellectual or artistic activity is regarded as feminising. Of course, this complicates any reading of the critique of Orwell as an attack on the machismo of a certain heroising revolutionary discourse.

education system. Furthermore, they are armchair revolutionaries whose rigid theoretical world-view is oblivious or indifferent to the consequences and the human cost - actual or potential - of their revolutionary discourse (see pp. 317-18).

In the passages referred to, Simon implies a misplaced sentimentality and irresponsibility on the level of discourse. On pp. 317-18, the distanced reportage style associated with *Homage* similarly connotes the abstract and inhumane nature of its author's beliefs, just as the incendiary discourse of the revolutionary pamphlet ends with the actual violence of war or terrorist acts. Finally, there is an implicit allusion on p. 318 to the activities of Burgess, Maclean and Philby which seems to suggest that the natural trajectory for the Marxists and fellow travellers with whom O. is associated is one of the betrayal of national and personal loyalties.

This representation of the theoretical beliefs of O. and his comrades as naïve and dangerous dictates the representation of O.'s experiences in Spain. The text constructs O. as an intellectual with an essentially abstract and idealised conception of revolution based, fundamentally, on a belief in the rationality of historical processes, and in the power of individual agents to influence events. Spain provokes a crisis as he becomes aware of the gap between his ideal and the reality of revolutionary Barcelona. Integral to the representation of this crisis is the opposition established between England (an endoxal construct; the England of a public-school educated elite), as the locus of stability, order and law, and Spain as its (negative) other, the locus of anarchy and barbarism.

On pp. 315-16 O. reproduces the kind of impressionistic notations Orwell favours, describing England as: 'une caverne de brigands, peuplé de cyniques durs-à-cuire et d'haïssables vieilles dames cérémonieusement occupées à déguster avec une sévère componction dans les salons de thé le contenu de tasses fumantes'.¹⁷ O.'s view mimics the Orwell who comments: 'England is [...] a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and silly' (Williams 1991, 21).

¹⁸ O.'s decision to go and fight in Spain stems from a desire to see this antiquated

17. See the familiar symbols of 'Englishness' cited at the end of *Homage*, p. 186. Simon poeticises Orwell's description, using typically Simonian metaphors (for instance describing the newspaper sellers as 'divinités mineures' (p. 316).

18. The quote is taken from the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. S. Orwell and I. Angus, London: Penguin, 1968, vol IV, p. 67.

and stifling social order destroyed. When he arrives in Barcelona, the baroque architecture and upheaval on the streets are described as the antithesis of ‘la ville aux architectures guindées qu’[O.] avait laissé derrière lui [...] empreinte, comme ses habitants, de cette respectabilité compassée, symbole d’un ordre dont il voyait enfin réalisée la destruction’ (p. 326).

In *Les Géorgiques*, O. has no qualms in turning his back on the social and cultural background of which, according to Simon, he is - equally unproblematically - the product. O.’s English existence is one of cosy, theoretical radicalism, and as such, it is contrasted with the brute realities of a Spain riven by class war and endemic violence. The following passage is fundamental to Simon’s representation of Spain and the revolution:

Il se trouvera projeté [...] dans quelque chose à quoi ne l'auront préparé ni les livres, ni ce qu'il a pu apprendre par lui-même au cours des successives expériences dans le corps de la police, puis dans les misérables quartiers de l'East End, ou encore pendant la période où il a gagné sa vie comme laveur de vaisselle, c'est-à-dire un monde où la violence, la prédation et le meurtre sont installés depuis toujours, et non pas de la façon plus ou moins sporadique, plus ou moins hypocrite, relativement codifiés, mais sans masque, sans frein, sans même ces conventions qui distinguent les surnois pugilats dans la boue de simples tueries entre tribus voisines, ou plutôt du sauvage écrasement du plus faible par le plus fort. [...] Entraîné par l'inerte pesanteur des brochures et des bavardages politico-philosophiques dont il s'est nourri, il glisse de haut en bas sur la carte dans cette étroite zone (cette frange [...] ce dernier espace encore libre, encore préservé, coincé entre le barbarisme et l'océan) sans se rendre compte qu'au fur et à mesure qu'il descend vers le sud il effectue dans le temps un parcours inverse, remonte à toute vitesse l'espace de plusieurs siècles pour être précipité dans un univers où aucune des notions, aucun des mots qui le constituent n'ont de sens, pas plus qu'il n'y a de sens à comparer un défilé de gens à peu près décemment vêtus [...] marchant en bon ordre derrière des pancartes, entourés de quêteurs à brassards et canalisés par des policiers sans armes, et un troupeaux de loqueteux affamés sur lesquels on tire à la mitrailleuse dès que les premiers apparaissent au coin de la rue [...] parce qu'ils ont demandé tout juste de quoi nourrir un chien, et maintenus au niveau de chiens [...] se privant de manger pour s'entasser dans des arènes où des hommes sauvages combattent des bêtes sauvages, suivants en procession [...] des idoles voilées en noir, sanglantes [...] comme les symboles conservés intacts non pas même de ce passé que d'autres avaient répudié en même temps qu'ils coupaient la tête de leurs rois, mais de quelque chose d'avant même les rois, comme si aux derniers confins d'un continent pendait une sorte de fruit desséché [...] oublié par l'Histoire [...] une espèce de cloaque où [...] était venu s'amasser [...] ce que les autres pays avaient péniblement et peu à peu expulsé au cours des siècles (pp. 318-20)

The description of Spain which follows (pp. 318-326), seems intended, in part, as a realist description of the actual conditions existing in Spain in 1936-37, and a challenge to what Simon sees as the superficially neutral, yet deeply propagandistic discourse of *Homage*. Paradoxically, however, representing Spain as a 'pre-enlightenment' space where bestial instincts are given free reign and reason founders is equally mythologizing. Such a discourse may parody the rhetoric of an (endoxally conceived) Enlightenment discourse of linear, teleological progress: Spain, having missed out on the Enlightenment, is a 'pre-historic' space because in this discourse, 'real' history is only said to begin with the reign of reason. However, from its tone, this representation in fact forms part

of an unironised, 'primitivist' strand of discourse in Simon's texts, as is discussed further below.

O.'s book-based approach to politics is no match for Spain: the war upsets his world-view and transforms his value system (see for instance p. 351).¹⁹ Indeed, his crisis of belief is reflected in a change in the tone of his narrative (see pp. 345-47, especially p. 346). However, Simon's main criticism of Orwell still stands: *Homage* is fundamentally dishonest. Firstly, in the straightforward sense that, as a historical document, it is inaccurate. Orwell claims that his account is factual and objective, in reality it is selective and biased. According to *Les Géorgiques*, a form of more or less conscious self-censorship operates in O.'s narrative.

However, as Britton comments, the notion of censorship is itself used to mean various things ranging from 'political manipulation' to 'psychic repression' (1984, 434). On occasion the text appears to be suggesting the latter, when O.'s 'self-deception' is ascribed to his naïvety and the rigidity of his belief system (p. 333 and p. 336). However, in the following passage, more cynical reasons are given for the 'trous' or inconsistencies in his account:

19. *Le Sacre* contains an early critique of the intellectual's failure to confront the brute realities of class politics, which implies that, as such, it constitutes a form of 'bad faith' or inauthenticity. The stepfather gradually comes to question his (theoretical) commitment to the revolutionary cause through his contact with what are represented as the more 'authentic' approaches to the revolution of the other arms smugglers. The encapsulating concept used in the text to express the notion of inauthenticity is that of 'tricherie' (p. 189). If idealism is a luxury for 'boy scouts', and bourgeois revolutionaries are damned by their class origins, it seems that what is required is a kind of Sartrean *mains sales* approach to political action. However, as Carroll states, this is a 'non-heroic' version of existentialism, in which maturity means 'moving beyond idealism' (1982, 44). Perhaps this is why Ceccaldi regards the young left-wing activist in *Le Sacre* as an idiot, because he has '[d]es bons sentiments qui datent de la Révolution Française' (p. 191). The stepfather's feeling of increasing animosity towards the young man can be explained by the fact that the latter is a mirror-image of the stepfather's own pre-crisis self, reflecting back to him his former inauthenticity. Later in the novel, his engagement is also represented as a form of self-hatred and inverted snobbery with consequences such as the destruction of culture involved in the church burnings (pp. 264-66). However, the position of 'authentic inauthenticity' attributed to Ceccaldi is inherently paradoxical, as Carroll himself recognizes, as discussed in Chapter One, n. 15.

Soit qu'il suppose certains faits déjà connus [...] soit que pour une raison ou pour une autre il passe sous silence ses véritables motivations (par exemple ses démarches à son premier retour du front pour rejoindre la faction à laquelle il était jusque-là opposé lorsqu'il se rend compte qu'étant en train de conquérir le pouvoir elle lui offrira mieux que toute autre l'occasion de réaliser son dessein, quitte à risquer de participer contre ses anciens amis à la répression dont il sera lui-même victime). En fait, au fur et à mesure qu'il écrit son désarroi ne cessera de croître. A la fin il fait penser à quelqu'un qui s'obstinerait [...] à relire le mode d'emploi et de montage d'une mécanique perfectionnée sans pouvoir se résigner à admettre que les pièces détachées qu'on lui a vendues [...] ne peuvent s'adapter entre elles ni pour former la machine décrite par la notice du catalogue, ni selon toute autre apparence aucune autre machine, sauf un ensemble grinçant d'engrenages ne servant à rien, sinon à détruire et tuer, avant de se démantibuler et de se détruire lui-même. (pp. 310-12)

This passage casts doubts on O.'s motives and integrity, and the final image suggests that his theoretical beliefs are both destructive and self-destructive.²⁰ The narrative as a whole makes a forceful case for regarding O.'s account as consciously self-serving, both politically and personally. O.'s response to his own doubts about the revolution is to repress them and to try to make events conform to his desired vision by constructing a narrative with a rigid, pre-determined pattern of cause and effect.

The main charge of dishonesty revolves around Orwell's description of the vibrant atmosphere reigning in Barcelona in December 1936 (*Homage*, pp. 1-4). Simon's fictional descriptions of revolutionary Barcelona are obviously intended to counteract this representation of 'idyllic proletarian unanimity' (Simon in Pugh 1985, 9). According to *Les Géorgiques*, there was already clear evidence both of the internal power struggle, and of the totalitarian turn the revolution was taking (pp. 331-32; see also p. 314 and pp. 335-36). In the Pugh interview, Simon makes the same criticism of Orwell's self-censorship and adds the charge that his writing is bad literature, referring to his 'crude, naive and stereotyped imagery (*imagerie d'Epinal*)' (Pugh 1985, 10). *Homage* is 'little more than a comic tourist guide' (Pugh 1985, 9). However, this is not really a textualist criticism: 'bad' literature is synonymous with writing that is not only sentimental or clichéd, but

20. Cox links this image to the pervasive use of the motif of the machine in the novel, which in Simon's text always ends in decay and destruction, thus parodying Virgil's image of the plough in the *Georgics* (1999, 186)

deliberately disingenuous or propagandistic. Simon admires Orwell's 'personal courage', but at the same time questions his 'intellectual courage and honesty':

one did not just wander casually into Republican Spain at that time, [...] if there did exist in Barcelona something called the 'Lenin Barracks' , there was also a 'Cuartel Karl Marx', and another invoking the name of Bakunin. The respective occupants of these various barracks considered each other to be 'counter-revolutionaries' and thought *only* of the best way of eliminating them (as happened in May 1937 to the benefit of the Stalinists). (Pugh 1985, 9, *my italics*)

The same charge is made against O. in *Les Géorgiques* (see pp. 328-29). The notion that a progressive state of 'proletarian unanimity' ever existed in Barcelona is attacked and the text asserts that the radically different political agendas were murderously present from the Republic's inception.²¹ O. deliberately perpetuates a collective delusion that the Spanish war was a truly revolutionary struggle, and obscures the ideological divisions which ultimately tore apart the Republican bloc. In addition, he twists events not only to conform to his audience's expectations (pp. 314 and 358-59) but to promote a heroic image of himself.

The attack on Orwell is made explicit in the Pugh interview: '*Homage* is a work (or rather a piece of special pleading on his own behalf) which is faked from the very first sentence' (Simon in Pugh 1985, 9). When Orwell claimed that before going to Spain his political position was one of naïve 'anti-fascism', he was simply lying. Simon's questioning of Orwell's motivations in wanting to

21. In *Le Sacre*, on the other hand, the revolution, if still represented as utopian, is depicted more positively. The process of disillusionment undergone by the student parallels the destruction of the early hopes raised by the revolution (see the passage on pp. 141-42). The realist notations used to describe the revolutionary period are largely similar to those in the other texts, but the tone is different. Roudiez points out that the implicit intertextual reference for this passage is probably Malraux's *L'Espoir*, in particular the images and atmosphere of its early sections. This is made explicit in the use of the words 'espoir' and 'illusion' to describe the atmosphere in Barcelona (the first part of *L'Espoir* is entitled 'L'illusion lyrique'). Simon's characterisation of the fervour of the early days is thus at least partly ironic. However, the passage on pp. 141-42 describes an atmosphere of excitement, enthusiasm and pride where social hierarchy and controls are seen as alienating and limiting. On the other hand, by the end, this is firmly established as a collective fantasy or 'mirage'. The experience of revolution is thus represented as a series of visual images that are intense, but elliptical and fragmentary; an almost mystical vision (*Le Sacre*, p. 142). For a discussion of the prevalence of 'mirage' effects in Simon's work, see Britton 1987. *La corde raide* also represents the revolution as hopelessly utopian (see for instance p. 46). Thus, as Carroll says, 'one always arrives on the scene too late in Simon's Spain, when all hope of plenitude and even the illusion of a positive resolution of conflict have already been lost' (1982, 43; see also Brewer 1995, 68).

switch to the International Brigade also undermines Orwell's integrity: by implication, suggesting his allegiance to the POUM was always secondary to his own self-interest (see *Les Géorgiques*, p. 311).

On the one hand, Simon's iconoclastic challenge to the heroic representation of the Civil War possesses a certain radical and ethical charge (see Duffy 1987, 427). However, if *Homage* is propaganda, then in the interests of whom or what? Moreover, how ideologically disinterested are Simon's own motives in attacking Orwell's text? He is not only raising the question of O./Orwell's (self) censorship, of the truth status of his narrative, and hence highlighting the ideological mediations which can underpin even the most ostensibly 'neutral' accounts of the war. Simon's attack on Orwell is bound up in an overdetermined way with what are presented as aesthetic, and ultimately epistemological, objections to his narrative as an exemplum of a particular model of writing. The next section considers in more detail the mixture of aesthetic assumptions about what constitutes 'true' historical realism and the (somewhat paradoxical) privileging of a 'textualist' aesthetic that partly underlie Simon's rejection of *Homage*.

The Unrepresentability of History

O.'s narrative is criticised, first of all, on the referential grounds that it is not objective enough. Its 'dishonesty' concerns not only its content but also its form, as it conceals its bias through stylistic trickery. By mimicking the style of reportage (mainly by using realist notation and eschewing subjective comments), O. lays claim to the privileged truth status of this genre:

pour mieux convaincre, il s'efforce (feint?) de se borner aux faits étayant son récit de juste ce qu'il faut d'images pour que celui-ci n'ait pas la sécheresse d'un simple compte rendu, lui conférant plus de persuasion, de crédibilité, par plusieurs notations de ces détails, de ces choses vues dont tout bon journaliste sait qu'elles constituent les meilleurs certificats d'authenticité d'un reportage, d'autant qu'elles s'insèrent dans une forme d'écriture qui se présente comme neutre (il recourt à des phrases courtes, il évite dans la mesure du possible les adjectifs de valeur, et d'une façon générale tout ce qui pourrait ressembler à une interprétation partisane ou tendancieuse des événements, comme s'il n'y avait pas été étroitement mêlé mais en avait été un témoin sans passion, seulement soucieux d'information). (p. 314)

Simon implies there should be a formal homology between the referent and its representation: because the narrative structure of *Homage* is logical and coherent, it does not accurately reflect the real chaos and confusion of the revolutionary situation, and the ideological fragmentation that occurred.²² It is only by forcing it into the rigid mould of conventional chronology, syntax etc. that O. turns an essentially fragmentary set of experiences into a coherent story with a message. In this, he is seen as ignoring his previous insight that 'l'Histoire se manifeste (s'accomplit) par l'accumulation de faits insignifiants, sinon dérisoires' (p. 304)

However, again, there is another, perhaps contradictory, argument at work. It is not simply that O.'s attempt to impose coherence and order retrospectively is seen as a distortion of this particular referent (the Spanish revolutionary situation). The meaningful narrative he strives to construct by inserting causal links between events is a discursive construct in the more radical sense that no such links exist prior to narrativisation. The coherence and, ultimately, the intelligibility of his narrative are merely the rhetorical effects of a particular form:

Peut-être espère-t-il qu'en écrivant son aventure il s'en dégagera un sens cohérent. Tout d'abord le fait qu'il va énumérer dans leur ordre chronologique des événements qui se bousculent pêle-mêle dans sa mémoire ou se présentent selon des priorités d'ordre affectif devrait, dans une certaine mesure, les expliquer. Il pense aussi peut-être qu'à l'intérieur de cet ordre premier les obligations de la construction syntaxique feront ressortir des rapports de cause à effet. (pp. 310-11)

Here, causality seems to be the result of contiguity and of chronological sequencing, and this is conflated, on a micro-level, with the demands of *langue*. This argument about causality suggests, again, that at the heart of Simon's critique are certain assumptions concerning what Britton calls 'the relationship between history and individual consciousness' (1987, pp. 31-33 and 69-71). However, here Simon's criticisms seem to stem from his fundamentally phenomenological concept of realism. The real reason why Orwell's linear, rationalist narrative is false is because it cannot - or does not - convey what for Simon is most ontologically real: the sensory experiences and (particularly

visual) perceptions, and the memories of past experiences and perceptions of an individual subject.

Moreover, this experience of self and of the external world is represented as essentially fragmentary and incoherent, subject to a kind of perceptual flux. This is the idea conveyed by Britton's term 'mirage', the metaphor which she uses to describe the momentary appearance and then disappearance of 'images of presence' in texts such as *Le Palace* (1987, 146). If writing is essentially concerned with this level of description, then historical discourse conceived as the attempt to locate particular events within a narrative in order to reveal and interpret social, political and cultural meanings must necessarily seem alien. Britton makes a similar point:

If even simple physical movement escapes perception, there is surely no chance at all that the large-scale events and the causal connections between them that constitute 'History' will be perceptible [...] And it is because of the impossibility of representing continuous change that when History is brought, or rather forced into vision, it can only be a parody of itself: History as spectacle has the jerky unreality and the inherent ridiculousness of a speeded-up film. (1987, 146)

Simon's text emphasises the inevitable deformations and lacunae of memory, the inevitable temporal gap between an experience and its representation. For him, this renders any reconstruction of the past problematic (see for instance *Les Géorgiques* pp. 47, 52, 348, and 359). According to Britton, this is one important reason why he questions the writing of both individual memoirs, and conventional historiography:

Views of history, as official versions of collective memory, suffer from all the problems which Simon associates with individual memory - its unreliability, its 'foisannant et rigoureux désordre' (*Histoire*: 296) and so on - but in a more acute form because they are no longer located within what is at least nominally a single consciousness. (1987, 144)²³

22. See Andrews 1989. Brewer shows that the cavalryman similarly comments on the need for a formal mimeticism to convey accurately the fragmentation of the *débâcle* (1995, 66).

23. The question must be asked why we should expect written historical discourse to conform to a certain phenomenological model of the workings of individual memory. Moreover, is it correct to conceive of all historical narratives as modelled on the lines of 'official versions of collective memory'? Many historians would presumably reject the notion that their accounts were 'officially' sanctioned ones.

However, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning Simon's critique of Orwell's writing are problematic. In fact, contradictory arguments are advanced for why Orwell's account is suspect. *Homage* is criticised on the *realist* grounds that it is not mimetic enough. Firstly, because there should be a formal homology between the subjective experience of revolution, characterised by chaos and confusion, and its textual representation. Secondly, because chaos and confusion characterize subjective experience *per se*, which is essentially fragmentary and constituted by a plethora of sensory impressions.

Thus it appears that it is not the very *possibility* of representational writing that is being questioned, but the particular model or code of realism espoused by Orwell: Simon's subjective, phenomenological realism is seen as superior to the conventional realism which underpins *Homage*. This phenomenological realist aesthetic means that Simon considers any account of past events which attempts to provide a theoretical overview or to fit events into what (he regards as) an objectively significant causal schema to be fictional, in the sense of being a post-rationalizing construct.²⁴

However, apart from criticising Orwell's text on mimetic grounds, Simon offers a more radical, 'anti-realist' argument. It is not just a certain kind of realist representation that is falsifying of reality but the very structures of writing itself. In *Les Géorgiques* (p. 47) his soldier-narrator 'stops writing, doubting the possibility of communicating to a reader what it feels like to be under enemy fire' (Pugh 1985, 11). Pugh asks Simon whether this expresses 'a doubt concerning that particular experience, or a more radical doubt over the relationship between what is lived and what is written' (ibid). Simon says that it is the latter: O. is represented as (consciously or unconsciously) ignoring the fact that the coherence and causality of his narrative are purely literary effects. In other words, narrative

24. Duffy points out that the phenomenological assumptions behind Simon's work differ considerably from phenomenology as conceived by Merleau-Ponty: 'Although Simon agrees with Merleau-Ponty in the latter's condemnation of the historian's overview, Simon's fundamental scepticism concerning the question of meaning prevents him from sharing Merleau-Ponty's confidence in the *Idée* of each civilization which manifests itself in every human gesture or word, and takes place in the intersubjective interstices at the confines of the multitude of individual human perspectives on phenomena' (1987, 426). Thus Simon's concept of realism, focusing exclusively on the individual consciousness, seems to bracket out any intersubjective structures of meaning.

inherently falsifies the 'reality' of lived experience as experienced existentially by the subject.

Thus, on the one hand, Simon criticises Orwell on realist grounds: what is in question is the superiority of a certain kind of realism that can adequately represent the flux of perceptual reality. On the other hand, this reality is posited as a kind of Lacanian 'réel', intrinsically unrepresentable and uncommunicable, alien to the symbolic order of language. The (impossible) attempt to represent perceptual reality conceived along these lines is one reason why, as Britton puts it, the anti-realist elements in the texts are 'a deliberate attempt to destructure the language system' (1993, 12).

However, here one is entering murky epistemological waters. If Orwell's realism is falsifying because it is based on notions of coherence and chronology which are, in fact, mere conventions or hypostasised bourgeois ideology (Barthesian *doxa*), then it is possible to conceive of a less falsifying form of representation, and to arrive at a 'truer' expression of the real. But if we accept a more 'zero-level' view of representation such as, according to Slavoj Žižek, characterises discourse theory (see 1994, 10) - as is also implied on occasion by Simon - then there is no getting round, or outside, language as a discursive order.²⁵

However, by the same token, the notion that what is most ontologically real are the sensory perceptions and experiences of an individual subject which exist prior to any representation of them, becomes problematic. Whether one takes the line that symbolic mediations are always already present even on this experiential level, or that, as soon as we wish to refer to, and make sense of, this perceptual reality we can only do so via referential codes which are themselves socially, culturally and historically mediated. Hence Prendergast's point about mimesis being a 'limit' that it is impossible to transgress (1986, 7-17). *Les Géorgiques*, while at times appearing to stake out some extra-discursive baseline from which to launch its ideological and aesthetic attack, also suggests written or visual representations are always mediated or encoded, and that the text is a space where various referential codes intersect. This can be seen in its knowing

25. In addition, as Prendergast shows in his discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's attempts to disarticulate all structured representation (see 1986, pp. 225-31 and 65-68), the fact that reality is always already encoded does not equate to the rejection of any referring relation between language and the world.

intertextual allusions; in the play on various revolutionary discourses (Michelet and Marx); and, more generally, in the numerous references to different codes of written and pictorial representation (for instance, the opening pages describing L.S.M.'s portrait).

Britton highlights this paradox in her discussion of *histoire* and *discours* in the novel. In representing O. as a narrator who is unreliable because disingenuous or deliberately misleading, Simon shows that Orwell's text is not *histoire* but *discours*. However, in doing so, 'the text inevitably problematizes the status of its own extradiegetic S2' (1984, 435). That is, the S2 (the *sujet de l'énonciation*) claims superior knowledge to O., that his discourse is the true version of events, thus claiming the status of *histoire*. Yet it is not a neutral account because it wants to persuade the reader of its own authority, and thus reveals its own status as *discours*:

Ironically, the section of *Les Géorgiques* which devotes the most space to questioning the possibility of representational writing is also the section which fundamentally suppresses that problematic in its tacit assumption that it - unlike O. - is writing the truth. (1984, 436)

According to Britton, the difference between the narratives of L.S.M. and O. is between an 'uncertain' discourse and an 'authoritative' one (1984, 437). The 'notion of language speaking the truth' is essential to O.'s story; in L.S.M.'s story the notion of an 'objective' or 'truth-speaking' discourse is undermined (as Britton shows in her discussion of Simon's parodic use of legal documents; 1984, 437-38). In O.'s, there is 'no available image of legality as a certain kind of text which might, by providing an ironic point of comparison, disturb the unproblematic status attributed to narrative discourse' (1984, 438). In addition, both narratives are structured hermeneutically, as 'rewritings' that originate in the unmasking of various kinds of censorship. However, whereas in L.S.M.'s story the narrator and reader are placed in the same relation of knowledge to the truth, in O.'s the narrator is constructed as a fully-knowing subject. The text performs a 'strip-tease' for the reader, by gradually revealing the enigma of Russian involvement in the war (1984, 438).

Britton argues that censorship can be seen as 'a crucial sign of the presence of an S2' (for more detail see 1984, 439-40). However, it also highlights the

apparent aporia in Simon's critique: if *all* writing or representation implicitly involves 'censorship' of the fact that it can never adequately express perceptual reality, then how can the S2's account be a truer discourse than O.'s ?

The relationship between the concepts of censorship and representation is thus deeply ambiguous: the thematizing of censorship *problematizes* representation, but can equally be seen as positing some kind of complete diegetic reality as a possibility within the text, against which the text can be measured. (1984, 441)

The overall effect of Simon's rewriting of *Homage* is to undermine O. as a subject of knowledge. More significantly, in terms of the vision of history explicit or implicit in the text, it questions the individual subject's ability to make sense of historical experience, and the existence of constant, universally applicable principles of historical analysis, upon which, for instance, Marxist theory depends, as discussed below. According to *Les Géorgiques*, the revolutionary beliefs held by O. are suspect not only because of their ethical consequences, but for ontological reasons. Marxism is an abstract, prescriptive, and mechanical model of causality ('le mode d'emploi et de montage d'une mécanique perfectionnée', p. 311) which bears no relation to the real world. The attempt to make reality fit the abstract model results only in destruction and death. Eventually it also leads to the self-destruction of the model - in historical terms, perhaps, the kind of purges carried out under Stalin - 'un ensemble grinçant d'engrenages ne servant à rien, sinon à détruire et tuer, avant de se démantibuler et de se détruire lui-même' (p. 312)

However, the phenomenological realist representation of O.'s experiences - particularly associated with *Le Palace* - simply involves a (set of) different conventions or representational code(s) to the realist narrative of *Homage*. Simon's claim about the truth status of his own narrative is emblematic of the kind of 'imitative fallacy' which Alistair Duncan locates in his early work and traces back, ultimately, to the influence of Sartre (1985, 92).

The description of the photograph of the militia train in *Les Géorgiques* illustrates these paradoxical strands in Simon's discourse. Duffy argues that, in one of his most anti-realist novels, *Les Corps conducteurs*, Simon subverts historical representation by questioning 'the synthesis of a number of discrete things and disparate experiences into a single nameable unit' (a historical event).

He does so by highlighting the discrepancies in the background details captured in the various photographic frames showing the moment of Kennedy's assassination. According to Duffy, the mere fact of focusing on these photographs and describing their spatial dimensions in 'neutral' language rejects the 'politico-historical treatment' usually given to such supremely historical events. By highlighting 'the emphatic subordination of what was to be seen with what was considered important and eventful', Simon shows that the representation of the event is selective and incomplete, questioning the synthesis of multiple, often random details into a single proairetic sequence. (1987, 421 and 424; see also Carroll 1982, 115-16).

Yet how could such a process of selection and synthesis be avoided? By highlighting 'the active role of the initial document-maker' in constructing the historical event, Simon may indeed be opening it up to different readings, other processes of selection based on different criteria, but is it possible ever to represent the totality of 'what was to be seen'? Indeed, 'what was seen', understood as the juxtaposition of the various frames, does not offer access to some ideal referent, the perceptual totality of the event, since the latter is itself already doubly mediated. Firstly, because 'what was seen' is the imaginary totality of the juxtaposed perspectives offered by a series of photographs and, secondly, because Simon's is a written description of that visual document.

Similarly, Carroll argues in relation to *Le Palace* that 'the impossibility of any adequate and sufficient representation produces a series of partial and contradictory representations which in turn multiply and complicate the effects of the original event' (1982, 116). Yet in recognising that any synthesis, any representation of a historical event is inevitably selective or partial – or even that 'all representation is constituted by both production and loss' (Carroll 1982, 116) – are we led to an inevitably relativist position in which the criteria on which any selection, any representation is made are equally arbitrary or equally valid?

To return to the textualisation of the photograph (*Les Géorgiques*, pp. 259-62), it is significant that Simon chooses to open this section with a description of a frozen snapshot of the Spanish revolution, resembling the graphic illustration of the 'fait divers' discussed in Chapter One. It is probably based on a photo reproduced in Broué and Témime's *La révolution et la guerre d'Espagne* (1961, 216), a text mentioned in his interview with Pugh (see Pugh 1985, 6). Rather than

discussing the photo thematically, or filling in its ‘politico-historical’ background, Simon’s description focuses more obliquely on the immediate details of the physical appearance of both railway carriage and militiamen, focalized through an external narrator. Apart from the allusion to the expropriation of the foreign-owned company, and the graffitied initials of the UGT, CNT and FAI on the side of the carriage, no explicit historical context for the image is offered. There are only a few brief references to the more distant past, to the ‘banquiers belges’ who funded the construction of the carriages.

However, Simon’s description of the carriage can hardly be described as neutral, emphasizing as it does its ‘abnormal’ dirtiness, ‘brutal’ utilitarian construction, and the sound of the (imagined) whistle of the engine (‘gémissements [...] à la fois plaintif et lugubre’). The carriage is described as ‘carcéral, sidérurgique, funèbre et barbare’ (p. 260). The description of the militiamen is similarly value-laden. Again, no reason for their presence is given, and the emphasis is on their anonymity (pp. 260-61). Apart from their association with the ‘animal’ or instinctive behaviour of football crowds, of the two individual militiamen described, one is likened to a child (‘un visage timide, doux, presque enfantin [...] Il y a aussi quelque chose de fragile et d’enfantin dans la façon dont il brandit son fusil et élève le point [...] dans un geste puéril de menace’, p. 261). The other is described as indifferent, posing somewhat self-consciously with a gun resembling a gangster’s pistol: ‘Le visage de type méditerranée [...] a une expression concentrée, farouche et quelque peu théâtrale, peut-être accusée à l’intention du photographe (c’est-à-dire du public qui, ultérieurement verra la photographie)’ (p. 262).

One can read this description as deconstructing a ‘mythologie’ of the Left about the Spanish War: the photograph crystallises a certain received view of the War as a heroic working-class struggle - a view *Homage* is also seen to embody. This view is subverted by focusing on the object, the carriage, and by describing the militiamen in anti-heroic terms. Finally, the theatricality of militiaman’s pose, and, more generally, the reference to gangster films, and even to the ‘Far-West’ (p. 259), and thus the western genre, remind us of the constructed nature of such images and highlights the clichéd *machismo* of this discourse.

Simon's Spain

Before examining the historical record to see how accurately Simon's representation of O./Orwell is, this section will briefly consider how the description of the militia train is emblematic of Simon's discourse on the Revolution, and, indeed, on Spain. In the reproduction of the original photo, it is difficult to distinguish clearly the expressions on the militiamen's faces (particularly the second militiaman whose face is partly obscured by his pistol) or for that matter the detail of the carriage. This may seem a minor point, except that it highlights the already constructed nature of 'what is seen' in Simon's description, and the critical stance already implicit.

According to Carroll, Spain in Simon's fiction 'appears to constitute a moment of absolute negativity in history, a moment which in its turn resists being negated and overcome, one of the moments of history which displace history from its projected course' (1982, 112). However, in *Les Géorgiques*, Spain is represented generally as a 'pre-historical' - in the sense of 'pre-enlightenment' - space where lawlessness and 'primitive' instincts hold sway. Again, by stressing the barbaric acts committed in the name of political and social emancipation, Simon is criticizing revolutionary discourse. In addition, the representation of Spain as 'outside' those processes of historical change which have affected the rest of Europe can be read as part of Simon's 'spatialization' of history (see Britton 1985, 97 and 1987, 151-64).

The 'primitivist' discourse on, in particular, the Spanish working classes could be intended as a social critique. The ignorance of the militiamen and the eruption of latent class war is the consequence of centuries of poverty and exploitation, particularly in the countryside, where the persistence of *caciquismo* means social relations remained semi-feudalistic (see for instance Preston 1996, 11). In Chapter One, we saw that Simon comments on the 'hereditary' hatred felt by the Barcelona working classes towards the Civil Guard. On p. 359 of *Les Géorgiques*, the opposing sides in the May fighting have the same physical features:

les mêmes visages couleur de bois ou de terre, osseux, aux angles durs [...] sauvages et indifférents, brûlés, tannés, usés semblait-il dès avant leur naissance par le soleil et les travaux de la terre: une race engendrée par les lointains croisements de Wisigoths, de Sarrasins et d'esclaves indiens pour produire quelque chose d'intermédiaire entre le mulet, le coutelas et les armes à feu.

However, this kind of description can easily appear fatalistic. The few inhabitants of the inhospitable countryside around O.'s front line position are described as:

quelques rares populations restées elles-mêmes à l'état sauvage, primitif, poussées et retenues là par on ne savait quelle malédiction, comme si seulement quelques phénomènes d'ordre pour ainsi dire cosmique, du genre d'invasions, des famines, des guerres ou des révolutions, pouvaient forcer des créatures humaines à s'accrocher à des collines pierreuses. (p. 344)

Here, wars and revolutions, events normally considered to be the result of political and social upheavals, are equated with natural disasters such as famines, and it is difficult to ascribe this wholly to a critical discourse on Spain's social and political backwardness. Particularly when faced with charged imagery of the kind used in the following description of Spain as:

une sorte de fruit desséché et ridé, oublié par l'*Histoire* et rejeté, repoussé par la géographie, comme un récipient, une espèce de cloaque où par l'effet de la pesanteur avait glissé, était venu s'amasser, s'accumuler ce que les autres pays avaient péniblement et peu à peu expulsé au cours des siècles, entassé là comme au fond d'une poche, d'un cul-de-sac, bloqué, malodorant et couvert de mouches. (p. 320)

Carroll argues that Simon's representation of the Spain of the Civil War - as with his representation of history in general - is not presented in completely negative terms (1982, 1120). He sees the view embodied by the American in *Le Palace* as simply opposing 'the optimistic representations he caricatures in others' (1982, 113). However, such negative images of sterility, organic putrefaction and decaying human waste (like those in *Le Palace*) are difficult to read solely as a salutary antidote to the Spain of the socialist paradise on earth. Or to the *mythologie* of the Spain of 'white sierras' and 'Moorish palaces' referred to by Orwell. Simon's idiom appears exceptionally pessimistic in its emphasis on the kind of excesses which, in fact, call to mind the discourse of the 'leyenda negra'

which grew up around the barbarities committed by Spanish colonisers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, Simon's fictional discourse may also echo a long-standing intellectual discourse which sees Spain as the eternal 'Other' of Europe, as belonging more to the African continent, and for this reason, as synonymous with under-development and 'barbarism'. In the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, an influential strand of Spanish intellectual discourse saw the country as having a dual identity, European and African. Moreover, Spain was seen as being in a state of decadence and in need of regeneration - often translated as a search for its 'authentic essence', as for instance, in the wake of Spain's loss of Cuba in 1898, among the so-called 'Generation of 98' writers. The poet Antonio Machado, for example, used the image of 'las dos Españas', and the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in particular used the (ahistorical) concept of an unchanging and essential Spanish reality ('intra-historia').²⁶ This historically and culturally conservative strand was seized upon most notably by Francoist intellectuals (see Labanyi 1994, n.13).

However, there are also traces of this essentialism in Leftist discourse. Broué and Témime, in their introduction, reject a 'culturalist' approach ('la voie hispanisante') to the analysis of the Civil War and claim to be concerned with universal (social, political, and economic) structures (see 1961, pp. 11 & 9). Yet they still quote a somewhat mystical and stereotypical view of Spanish history and of the Spanish 'character'. Their source is *Espagne*, written by the distinguished exile historian Manuel Tuñón de Lara, who associates particular character traits with particular regions of Spain. In addition, the (paradoxical) notion is advanced that there is 'une unité souterraine qui fait la squelette intérieur de l'Espagnol, qu'il soit bavard et Andalou, sévère et Castillien, rusé

26. The validity and usefulness of this generational grouping is questionable. The writers thus categorised have different political affiliations, and different visions of the form such a 'regeneration' would take and of the characteristics of the 'essential' Spain. Nevertheless, in very general terms they are all concerned with the 'problema de España'. More significantly for this thesis, their mythologising representation of the landscape and supposed 'peasant' traditions of Castile as the expression and bedrock of an essential Spanish national character, have more recently been questioned by critics (see Labanyi 1994, especially 133-41). Labanyi shows that their representation of historical processes in fact constitutes 'a rejection of history for nature' which is 'a rejection of history for myth' (1994, 147) - a criticism which could also be made of Simon's texts, as will be argued.

comme un gallego, intéressé comme un Catalan ou travailleur comme un Basque' (1961, p. 9).

Nowadays, modern historians like Preston still recognize the symbolic resonance of the fact that, in Spain, 'for a thousand years civil war has been if not exactly the norm then certainly no rarity' (1996, 9). However, discussions of the Civil War in terms of essential national characteristics - rather than, for instance, in terms of economic and social processes of modernization found across Europe - are seen as reproducing the cultural essentialism found in nationalist discourse on the war.²⁷ As Preston puts it: '[The Civil War] was above all a Spanish war, or rather a series of Spanish wars, yet it was also the great international battleground of fascism and Communism' (1996, 6).

The Other Orwell

A close reading of Orwell's *Homage* and *Looking back on the Spanish War*, and of his biography, reveals that Simon's portrayal of O. and of 'English Marxist intellectuals' both draws upon and reinforces a set of cultural and social clichés and, more importantly, misrepresents Orwell's experiences. It is also misleading as regards the complex and ambivalent nature of Orwell's relation to his class background and nationality, and his relationship to British Left politics.

Firstly, the representation of the war in *Homage* does not seek to disguise the physical hardship experienced by the soldiers. As regards Simon's main charge regarding Orwell's description of his first impressions of Barcelona, while this does indeed refer to the 'idyllic proletarian unanimity' (Pugh 1985, 9) reigning in the city, Orwell also qualifies his view by saying the city appears so to one who has just arrived from England (1989, 2). Moreover, he ends with a half-ironic comment on the 'rather pathetic [...] literalness with which these idealistic Spaniards took the hackneyed phrases of revolution' - a far cry from the discourse of the true believer (1989, 4). In addition, Orwell retrospectively alters his first enthusiastic endorsement of the revolutionary situation (*Homage*, pp. 92-93). Moreover, his tone in the novel is consistently self-ironising: for instance,

27. Likening the Civil War to a holy crusade against the enemies of the eternal Spain as per the fifteenth century *Reconquista* was a commonplace of Nationalist discourse, for instance as in the film scripted by Franco, *Raza* (1941).

when he describes trying to appear as 'bourgeois' and 'English' as possible when fleeing the purge of the POUM. Simon omits these more irreverent details (Orwell's scrawling Poumist graffiti on the walls of the smart hotels he visits), which do not fit the portrayal of O. as an earnest, if disillusioned, revolutionary.

A simpler explanation for why there is no mention of the power struggle Simon claims was clearly in evidence at this point is that Orwell was not in Spain in November 1936. He arrived at the end of December and spent only a week in Barcelona before departing for the Aragón front. In fact, most of Orwell's time in Spain was spent at the front, which makes him ill-placed to observe at first-hand the political in-fighting, as he makes clear in *Homage* (p. 82).²⁸ Orwell did not know the POUM was under attack from the Communists and Stalinist agents (Shelden 1991, 277) whereas Eileen Blair, working in ILP headquarters in Barcelona, was more aware of the situation (see 1991, 302).

What the description of his experiences in the militia also highlights is the crucial impact it had not only on Orwell's overall view of the war, but on his subsequent political development:

I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites [...] However much one cursed it at the time, one realised afterwards that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable [...] The Spanish militias, while they lasted, were a sort of microcosm of a classless society. [...] And, after all, instead of disillusioning me it deeply attracted me. The effect was to make my desire to see Socialism established more actual than before. (1989, 82-84; see also 150)

How this experience of genuine solidarity determined Orwell's representation of the Spanish 'character' is discussed below. The militia was an absolutely formative political experience for Orwell, one that crystallised his theoretical beliefs, not vice versa. Moreover, to judge from the available biographical evidence, in this respect, Orwell's experience is entirely dissimilar to Simon's: Simon did not fight with the militias, or even leave Barcelona. In fact, Orwell's

28. His first period of duty lasted until 25 April 1937, by which time he had spent 115 days at the front (1989, 82 & 88). This means he must have left Barcelona around 30 December (on p. 209 he says early January). Shelden comments that Orwell left England on 23 December, and spent a week in Barcelona (mostly in training at the Lenin Barracks) before going to the front (1991, 272 & 276).

view of Barcelona when he returns from the front reads like a reportage version of Simon's representation of the city. He highlights the political tensions and hatred and, in contrast to Simon's claims, gives details of the political assassinations and the funerals which were commonplace at the time (1989, 97-98).

However, the most direct reply in the text itself to Simon's accusation of political naïvety is found in the appendices. Here Orwell admits his initial gullibility (his acceptance of 'the *New Chronicle-New Statesman* version of the war'), and his ignorance of - and indifference to - the complex political situation (1984, 188-89). Orwell joined the POUM militia because the ILP enabled him to get to Spain, after a hostile reception from the British Communist Party whose chief, Harry Pollitt, refused to help him obtain the required travel documents. On arrival in Barcelona, Orwell still wanted to join the Communist-run International Brigade, but because the ILP had issued him a letter of introduction, 'he felt obliged to go to Barcelona first and meet the party's representative' (Shelden 1991, 274-75). There seems little substance to Simon's suggestion that Orwell deliberately attempted to conceal his reasons for joining the POUM militia (presumably because if he joined out of conviction, the supposed neutrality of his account becomes suspect).

Orwell gives a similar explanation in *Homage* for his decision to join the International Brigades after his return from the Aragón Front: he was 'sick of the inaction' and wanted to go to Madrid (1989, 214). This decision was made in February, before his return to Barcelona and the May fighting. Shelden confirms this version and says that, after much discussion, Orwell and Eileen were only granted 'conditional' approval to move to Madrid, because of their POUM affiliations and the rumours about the party being 'Franco's Fifth Column' (1991, 288-89). The reason he did not find himself in the impossible position of having to disown his former comrades in the POUM was simply due to the chance event that his new boots were not ready (1989, 96-97).

The suggestion in *Les Géorgiques* that O.'s political judgement and integrity are suspect since he is willing to switch allegiances does not stand up to scrutiny, since, according to Orwell, this decision had nothing to do with his

political preferences.²⁹ The accusation of political opportunism echoes a similar charge made against Orwell by Bob Edwards, the leader of the English ILP contingent, who, after Orwell's death, accused him of simply trying to get material for his future book on Spain. Sheldon refutes this charge by referring to Orwell's 'reckless courage on the battlefield' (1991, 289-90). Edwards's accusations were used subsequently by critics of Orwell who wanted to 'denigrate the part he played in the Spanish Civil War' (1991, 289). What this reveals is a long tradition of attacks on Orwell and his role in the Civil War, which can help to contextualize Simon's criticisms.³⁰

Orwell's explanation for his desire to join the International Brigades shows that at this point he still saw himself as essentially non-aligned in relation to the various Left factions. His experiences in the militia politicised him, but this was a gradual process, not a lightning conversion (see 1989, 200). His first appendix is intended to show how the various factions on the Republican side aligned themselves in relation to the events of the first year of the war, particularly in relation to the social revolution in Catalonia. It also provides an outline of the positions of the Communists, Anarchists and POUM on the 'primacy of war versus revolution' question.

The second appendix tries to give the background to the May fighting, and assesses the case that the suppression of the POUM was justified on the grounds that it was a secret Fascist organisation. The fact that Orwell leaves discussion of the political situation to the appendices is surely significant (even if his wishes were ignored when it was initially published). According to him, this is, firstly, to save those readers who are 'not interested in the horrors of party politics'. Secondly, because the structure of *Homage* is intended to mimic the actual evolution of his attitude to the war by separating the reconstruction of his initial impressions and his experiences from any retrospective analysis. The problem with this is not Simon's charge of disguised propaganda but, ironically, that Orwell's personal experiences are isolated from the political and historical context which alone can give them meaning and which, as he admits, is vital to any understanding of the conflict (1989, 188). In this respect, it is interesting to

29. In fact, Orwell says that his personal political preference would have been to join the Anarchist militia, but that, again, the FAI recruited for Teruel, not Madrid (1989, 96-97).

30. Sheldon argues that it was not Orwell but Edwards who misrepresented his own part in the

examine the dismissal of O.'s attempt to contextualize and analyse his experiences in *Les Géorgiques*:

Plus tard, il se lança dans des explications compliquées et pour ainsi dire techniques, émaillées de sigles, d'initiales de partis, de syndicats, de factions [...] comme ces symboles de corps chimiques seulement compréhensibles aux initiés et qui [...] peuvent se combiner à peu près à l'infini pour constituer aussi bien des engrais, des détergents ou des explosifs. (p. 352)

Apart from suggesting that the different ideological shades and complexities of Republican politics are somehow superfluous, this implies the various positions adopted and doctrinal distinctions in play are ultimately open to any kind of 'combination', with more or less violent results. How is this characterisation of O./Orwell's attempts at political analysis as a mystificatory diversion into mere 'technicalities' to be squared with Simon's assertion in the Pugh interview that Orwell is attempting to erase the full political picture? Moreover, the notion that Orwell is a covert Trotskyite rings all the more hollow in the light of Orwell's apparent lack of dogmatism. In *Homage*, he asserts that the inter-party feud seemed like an annoying distraction from the real business of fighting Franco ('a domestic squabble', p. 209). If he had to choose between any of the parties, he claims he favoured the Communists because of their 'primacy of the war argument' as opposed to the POUM's position of 'social revolution or Fascism' (1989, 210).

As regards the May events, Orwell is at pains to present both sides of the affair. He analyses the arguments for and against the view that it was a nationalist-inspired coup, and his careful consideration of the charges of treason made against the POUM leaders is a far cry from the dogmatic revolutionism attributed to him in *Les Géorgiques*. His - eventual - partisanship is not based on any rigorous understanding of the supposedly Trotskyite POUM's ideology, but a combination of circumstance and conviction. Firstly, he objects to the Stalinist methods employed by the Communists (see 1989, 207-208)³¹ and to the latter's bad faith in advancing the primacy of war argument. Secondly, he criticises the divisiveness of Communist-led attempts to discredit those groups on

war (1991, 289-90).

31. See also his reaction to Bob Smilie's 'pointless death', p. 171.

the Republican side which they perceive to be their ideological enemies (1989, 247). He argues that Communist policy was ultimately counter-productive in destroying support for the Republic among revolutionary groups, and moves finally to the conclusion that a revolutionary policy was necessary in order to win the war (pp. 211-12). Whether one agrees with his conclusion is beside the point.³² It is hard to reconcile either the content or the tone of Orwell's account with Simon's representation of it as the work of either; (i) a doctrinaire Marxist or Trotskyite; (ii) a sensation-seeking opportunist, or (iii) a combination of both.

Finally, there are Orwell's own disclaimers about the objectivity of his account. On the one hand, his stated aim is to reconstruct an objective account of his experiences and their wider political causes and consequences. Moreover, he appears to think that the major obstacle to this is simply the scarcity of available documentation (1989, 216). However, what is equally stressed at other points in *Homage* is his (inevitably) subjective and limited perspective, the (inevitable) element of human error, but also the existence of ideological bias in his account. He warns the reader to be wary of his partiality and, indeed, that of any account of the War (pp. 186 & 226). This reminds us of the concrete context to *Homage*. The text is an overtly ideological intervention because its aim is to unmask those contemporary accounts that claim to be free of 'partisanship' or ideology. Specifically, Orwell wants to expose the bias of the ubiquitous Communist version of the May events which is being passed off as the 'true' version (1989, 226):

Men and women had been imprisoned because fact had been made subordinate to opinion, and Orwell did not want his readers to forget that innocent people had been harshly punished. 'If I had not been angry about that', Orwell explained later, 'I should never have written the book'. (Shelden 1991, 311)

It is worth emphasising how contentious Orwell's account of the suppression of the POUM was at the time of its publication. The Communist Party enjoyed considerable prestige, and Left-wing opinion in Britain was used to a received

32. In 'Looking Back on the Spanish War', Orwell modifies his view, stressing the international dimensions of the conflict (1984, 228-29). Graham argues that Orwell also misunderstood the composition of the PSUC, and that the use of the term 'Communists' in the context of the May fighting needs to be understood in more complex way. See Graham 1999, especially 499, 503.

view of the Republican government as 'a victim of Fascism', not as itself complicit with totalitarian forms of political repression. Orwell encountered opposition when trying to publish his first piece ('Eye-witness in Barcelona') on returning to Britain in June 1937, and his planned book was rejected by Gollancz, because the latter did not want to publish anything critical of the Communists. Orwell also came in for what he saw as 'a campaign of organised libel' against him by *The Daily Worker* because of the views he had expressed in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. He regarded this as an attempt to 'get me written off beforehand as a liar, so as to discredit anything I say [about Spain]' (Shelden 1991, 304-11).

Given this background, it is significant that Orwell comments on several occasions in *Homage* that he is not in the business of anathematising his opponents. In *Looking Back on the Spanish War*, he goes further: he does not subscribe to a conspiracy-theory explanation of the actions of the Communist party but sees it as 'opportunistic and stupid' (1984, 229). Overall, Paul Preston's assessment of the 'truth status' of *Homage* seems accurate. He sees the text as tendentious, but not propagandistic: 'Orwell's is a sane, moving, but ultimately narrow, vision of the May 1937 events in Barcelona, written with a pro-POUM stance which has been taken, erroneously, as an overview of the war, which it is not' (1996, 236).

On the other hand, Orwell was also anxious to retain the concept of objective truth in historiography. Considering his warnings about the inevitability of ideological bias, this may seem paradoxical, and Simon's critique exploits this contradiction. In fact, Orwell is not really claiming that it is possible to write a 'true' or 'objective' - in the sense of ideology-free - account of a series of historical events, particularly when conflicting political ideologies lie at their heart. However, he recognises the value of a general notion of 'objective truth' as a regulatory ideal or categorical imperative in the writing of history in order to avoid the trap of relativism.

If one denies altogether the possibility of arriving at an (albeit consensual) notion of what constitutes historical fact, then from what position can one criticize historical accounts on the grounds of bias and distortion? This is no mere abstract point: there are direct political consequences of historical relativism which become evident when we read Orwell's later text, *Looking Back on the Spanish War*, written in the middle of the Second World War (Autumn 1942).

Here, Orwell links the particular case of how to write a 'truthful' account of the Spanish war with the more universal threat to the concept of objective truth represented by the 'totalitarian' view that all history - from whatever side of the political spectrum - is basically propaganda:

How will the history of the Spanish war be written? If Franco remains in power, his nominees will write the history books [....] But suppose Fascism is finally defeated and some kind of democratic government restored in Spain [....] What kinds of records will Franco have left behind him? Suppose even that the records kept on the Government side are recoverable - even so, how is a true history of the war to be written? [....] From the anti-Fascist angle one could write a broadly truthful history of the war, but it would be a partisan history, unreliable on every minor point [....] I know it is the fashion to say that most of recorded history is for the most part inaccurate and biased, but what is peculiar to our own age is the abandonment of the idea that history could be truthfully written [....] A Britain and a German historian would disagree on many things [about the First World War], even on fundamentals, but there would still be that body of, as it were, neutral fact on which neither would seriously challenge the other. It is just this common basis of agreement, with its implication that human beings are all one species of animal, that totalitarianism destroys. (1984, p. 224)³³

The important issues raised here concerning the possibility - or desirability - of 'neutral fact' and of objectivity in historical writing will be raised again in Chapter Four, in relation to Marsé. The main point about the present discussion is that Simon's charge that O./Orwell tries to represent himself as 'un témoin sans passion' (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 314); carefully concealing his own political bias, does not stand up to scrutiny. What, then, lies behind Simon's tendentious representation of Orwell's narrative stance? Moreover, how accurate is Simon's portrayal of O./Orwell's class and cultural background, and his suggestion that O.'s espousal of revolutionary politics can be directly related to his public-school education?

There is no scope in this thesis to consider the latter question in any real detail. However, firstly, Raymond Williams stresses the 'uncertain and ambiguous' nature of Orwell's conception of, and relation to, his nationality, and to his class identity. It is only in a complex sense that Orwell can be called a product of his social class. His sense of being an outsider (his early childhood

33. Of course, Orwell's fear was well-founded: as Graham says, under Franco 'history was

and early adulthood spent outside England, his negative experiences at school) plus his first-hand experience of imperialism in Burma, eventually led him to identify - in however negative or ambivalent a fashion - with the oppressed against the ruling classes. However, this did not lead to an uncomplicated rejection of 'the system and the ideology in which he had been educated and in which he had served' (Williams 1991, 19; see also Chapter 2 and especially pp. 9, 16 and 22). Crick also comments that Orwell's 'love of English literature, customs and countryside' meant that 'in many ways he remained socially conservative' and, while rejecting nationalism, he wished to retain the positive value of patriotism as 'love of one's own native land' (1980, xvii).

Thus Orwell is not either representative of a (stereotypical) category of the English gentleman, nor indeed unproblematically identified with the outlook of a dissident section of this particular class. In his own autobiographically-based essay 'Such, Such Were the Joys', Orwell gives the lie to this monolithic representation of the upper classes with his acute awareness of the social distinctions operating among the boys at St Cyprian's (1984, 440-45). In particular, while Simon's suggestion that the contact sports given so much importance at public schools contribute to producing emotionally-repressed individuals could be considered a plausible, if crude, psycho-sociological observation, it seems particularly ironic in Orwell's case. Orwell believed such sports foster competitiveness and aggression and, on an international level, nationalism (1984, 440, 443 and 321-24).

More importantly, Simon's representation of O.'s political beliefs is completely caricatural. Firstly, because Orwell was by no stretch of the imagination and at no point a Trotskyite, or indeed a Marxist. According to Williams, he was 'critical of Marxist theory, its jargon and its sectarian and factional feuds' (1991, 54; see also Crick 1980, xiv-xv, particularly on Orwell's mockery of the notion of 'ideological necessity'). In *The Road to Wigan Pier* - written before he left for Spain - Orwell begins a process of explicitly distancing himself from 'the orthodox Left' (1991, 13): a process which would be completed after his Spanish experience. Orwell's brand of democratic socialism was always 'iconoclastic' and 'non-doctrinaire' (Williams 1991, 63; see also Crick 1980, xv). In addition, Williams confirms Orwell's own description of the broadly (and

reduced to the function of state propaganda' (1986, 491).

naively) 'anti-Fascist' position which motivated him to go to Spain - initially to write on the war - and his disinterest in ideological shades of differences.³⁴

Just as Orwell was not a revolutionary prior to going to Spain, his rejection of his privileged background was not grounded in any theoretical commitment. Indeed, Orwell never attended university (Shelden 1991, 85; Crick 1980, 73), and his rejection of the conventional life of his class was not simply an intellectual choice but an existential one. In order to turn himself into a writer and to write about contemporary social conditions from the position of the underclass, he embarked on a life which involved financial hardship and, often, physical deprivation (Williams 1991, 34). Moreover, in presenting O. as representative of those who volunteered to fight in Spain, *Les Géorgiques* obscures the fact that many volunteers were not intellectuals nor from a privileged class background. On the whole, the Orwell who always privileged first-hand experience over theoretical knowledge (Williams 1991, 51) looks very different from Simon's O.. In fact, the details of his life bring into sharp relief the unintentional irony of the novel's attempt to negate - or elide - the wealth of worldly experience which does not fit its representation of him as a naive bookworm (for example p. 345).

Apart from distorting Orwell's politics prior to his experiences in Spain, *Les Géorgiques* also misrepresents the significance of the Spanish experience in terms of Orwell's subsequent political trajectory, in particular the effect of the May events upon him. Unlike O., on hearing of the suppression of the POUM Orwell does not undergo any sudden revelation or 'philosophical dilemma': in *Homage* he claims his immediate feelings were of annoyance and boredom. Later he indeed refers to a feeling of absurdity and unreality, which he ascribes to 'the ineradicable English belief that "they" cannot arrest you unless you have broken the law', but he also comments ironically on the cultural relativism of this kind of world-view (p. 181). Moreover, he says that he failed to reflect on the political significance of the events, and that any such analysis was made retrospectively (pp. 166-67). Yet while at various points expressing uncertainty as to whether the actions of those who supported the Republican struggle served any useful purpose (for instance 1984, 229), the conclusions he eventually drew did not lead to the abandonment of his beliefs in revolutionary socialism - on the contrary.

34. Shelden says that Orwell's uncertainty about whether to volunteer or not was based not on a lack of conviction but on his assessment of his health and physical fitness (1991, 273-74).

Orwell's experiences, even on the run, did not leave him feeling disillusioned. On the contrary, he accords his experiences an overwhelmingly positive gloss: the War is, for him, an 'emotionally widening experience' (1984, 222). In the last few pages of *Homage* (185-86), he begins by echoing the sentiments expressed in *Les Géorgiques* about the incommunicability of intense experience, partly because of the temporal and existential gap that exists between such experience and the attempt to record/reconstruct it retrospectively. However, the difficulty is all the more formidable in Orwell's case since the experience he wants to convey is one which seems to transcend the bounds of political reality as conventionally understood. After months of living through a war in which his life was 'just as sordid and degrading as it could be in prison' (1984, 216), and after experiencing political persecution, his faith in humanity is not destroyed but rather confirmed. The sea and the weather in Banyuls are described in similarly negative terms to those used by O. in *Les Géorgiques* (*Homage*, p. 185), yet the tone is completely different. Despite his 'mostly evil' memories of the war, he affirms that: 'curiously enough, the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings' (p. 186). The magnitude of the sentiment is belied by the typically understated tone of this sentence.

This is not only a humanist affirmation but also the expression of a new political belief. Contrary to *Les Géorgiques*, Orwell's experiences do not lead to the collapse of his revolutionary beliefs since, in fact, he did not hold any such definite beliefs before going to Spain. Rather, Spain leads to a new and sharpened sense of political commitment. The main reason his experience at the front is so valuable is because it is a demonstration of socialism in action (1989, 82-84), and it is after and through Spain that Orwell really becomes a socialist. It also sharpens his anti-Communism into 'a positive position' (Williams 1991, 13; see also 55-57). To read the Orwell of *Homage* as the 'voice of political disillusion, of the inevitable failure of revolution and socialism' (Williams 1991, 60) is to read the text inaccurately from the perspective of his later works on the threat of totalitarianism, *Animal Farm* and *1984*. This 'right-wing' conclusion is, according to Williams, not a true representation of Orwell's views on socialism (see 1991, Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Indeed, even in *Looking Back*, with the distance that Orwell now takes from 'the squalid farce of left-wing politics' (1984, 232), the analysis of his

experiences ends with the opening image from *Homage*, in a poetic homage to the Italian militiaman. This seems precisely the kind of mythologising, simplistic and ultimately irresponsible discourse on 'the masses' Simon counters with his representation of the militiamen in *Le Palace* and in *Les Géorgiques* which erases the real complexities of the political situation - as Orwell himself acknowledges (1984, 230). With hindsight, Orwell's discourse can seem sententious. However, what such a view underplays is Orwell's own capacity for irony, revealed in the explicit or implicit debunking of an over-idealised view of the revolution or the working classes (see Orwell 1989, 104 and 1984, 226). Williams also comments on Orwell's position of compassionate detachment (1991, 18).

However, Orwell's Spanish experiences are not based on detached observation but on direct, and committed, involvement. Thus it seems more likely that the description of the Italian militiaman is a rhetorical device, 'a sort of visual reminder of what the war was about' (1984, 230), that is, a war with an inescapable class dimension. The militiaman is an explicitly allegorical, if not invented, figure. He symbolizes 'the flower of the European working class, harried by the police of all countries, the people who fill the mass graves of the Spanish battlefields and are now, to the tune of several millions, rotting in forced-labour camps' (1984, 230). As such, he provides a means of cutting through the ideological complexities of the Spanish war and of real-politik in general, to what for Orwell remains the 'real' issue of the conflict. 'Shall people like that Italian soldier be allowed live the decent, fully human life which is technically available or shan't they?' (1984, 232).

In addition, there is an important culturalist aspect to Orwell's positive verdict on his Spanish experiences. On the one hand, Orwell's comments on Spain and the Spanish sometimes seem self-evidently the product of a foreign, or even exoticising, *guide bleu* discourse on Spain. Orwell admits this discourse informed his preconceptions about the country (1989, 156-57), and that his vision was part-stereotype and part-fantasy (see 1989, 157). Yet his first-hand experiences do not seriously alter his favourable predisposition towards Spain and the Spanish. Even if certain cultural differences (like unpunctuality) are 'exasperating', he also acknowledges that the opinions of 'Northern Europeans' such as himself are equally culturally determined (1989, 11).

Despite the fact that certain of the 'national characteristics' he describes are assigned to a particular socio-economic group, the Spanish working classes (1989 p. 10), he also obviously feels there is a cultural element which can, on occasion, transcend class or ideological boundaries. Hence his extension of the characteristic of 'decency' to the Communist police who do not turn his wife out of bed (1989, 178-79). Summing up his impressions, he remarks that:

I have the most evil memories of Spain, but I have very few bad memories of Spaniards [...] They have, there is no doubt, a generosity, a species of nobility, that do not really belong to the twentieth century. It is this that makes one hope that in Spain even Fascism may take a comparatively loose and bearable form. Few Spaniards possess the damnable efficiency and consistency that a modern totalitarian state needs. (p. 178)

Knowing the systematic repression carried out by the Franco regime, this notion of an innate Spanish nobility looks extremely naïve, although the early Franco state, characterized by a 'return to the past' (see Richards 1995, 173), was not noted for the efficiency of its institutions. Orwell's generalisations also skate over the complex differences and nuances - regional, linguistic, social, political, and religious - which render the notion of national identities problematic, particularly in the case of Spain, where the question has always been so politically vexed.

However, Orwell's comment seems intentionally impressionistic, and is not offered as a rigorous cultural analysis. Crick comments that Orwell saw himself as a political writer, not a philosopher, and consciously developed a 'plain style' which limited 'the development of his own more theoretical ideas' (1980, xiv). In addition, Orwell's generalisations are based in personal experience: although he knows first-hand that totalitarian tactics know no cultural boundaries, in his view, the negative is outweighed by the positive when it comes to the Spanish. One reason for this, paradoxically, is because his main experience of 'Spain' occurred in a very specific social and political milieu - with the POUM militias on the Aragón front.

The fact remains that, whether one reads Orwell's comments on the Spanish as partial and superficial generalisations or not, his discourse is in marked contrast to Simon's generalized pessimism. In the final analysis, Orwell can be criticised for his initial naivety - a criticism he himself makes. The

accuracy of his analysis of the power struggle in the Republican zone can also be questioned - and indeed has, by historians such as Paul Preston and Helen Graham. Graham, for instance, sees the May Days as a complex series of events of which Orwell's focus on the suppression of the POUM is but one strand.³⁵ However, Simon goes further than this: he represents *Homage* as deliberately misleading and propagandistic, and he questions Orwell's motivations and his intellectual integrity. The idealism of those who volunteered to fight in Spain is something Orwell recognises even in those on the opposing side to him during the May fighting. For Preston too, there is no denying the personal courage and sense of sacrifice of many or most foreigners who fought in the Communist-run Brigades - whatever the totalitarian political aims of the commissars (1996, 5). By the same token, there is no reason not to extend the same generosity to Orwell, and to the majority of POUM militiamen whom he describes in *Homage* and *Looking Back*.

The Opium of the Intellectuals

If the charges of inaccuracy and undeclared political bias in Orwell's account are largely unfounded, is Simon's critique tendentious, designed to undermine Orwell as an eyewitness to the May events in Barcelona, and by extension his political analysis of the origins and significance of the crisis? There are obvious ideological reasons why this could be the case: Simon's own political allegiances - at the time, his membership of the French Communist Party, mentioned but never expanded upon - put him on the opposite side to Orwell in the May fighting (Orr 1993, 164-65). Orr quotes Hugh Thomas's assessment of the Spanish Communists as 'a disciplined, left-of-Centre, bourgeois régime, capable of winning the war' and of the POUM as attractive to foreigners because of 'the

35. According to Graham, the May Days were 'the culmination of a very particular form of social conflict [...] in which, driven by the centralizing needs of the war effort, the bourgeois state [...] finally broke down the political resistance and social autonomy of the most powerful and recalcitrant sector of industrial labour in Spain [...] it was about breaking the CNT's organizational solidarities in Barcelona in order to deprive its constituencies, aided and abetted by various parts of 'outcast Barcelona', of the mechanisms and political means of resisting the state. (1999, 531)

romantic supposition that it embodied a magnificent Utopian aspiration' (Orr 1993, 165 and Thomas 1986, pp. 301-302, 646).³⁶

On the one hand, Orr accepts that straightforward political bias may lie at the heart of Simon's attack on Orwell: we are not dealing with O.'s account of events but Simon's attitude to the Poumist interpretation of them. On the other, it is unclear whether she endorses Simon's view that his own account is more 'honest' than Orwell's. She comments: 'Simon does not "romanticize" these [events] from the armchair comfort of later documentation of what happened, whereas Orwell, in fact, admitted that he gave a more sympathetic account in *Homage* that he actually felt' (1993, 164-65).³⁷ Again, this does not say much more about Orwell's views of the merits of the various party lines than is contained in the appendices to *Homage*. Nor does it seriously undermine his credibility, and the criticism of his account as being 'romanticized' has been discussed above.

However, Simon's attack on Orwell and his representation of the Spanish civil war cannot be said to be ideologically-motivated in a straightforward sense since Simon's own ideological position is, in fact, unclear. It is not the case that 'Simon's personal politics, never openly stated, are clarified indirectly by their opposition to Orwell's' (Orr 1993, 165). Simon's youthful political allegiances, apart from his brief flirtation with Communism, are not clearly delineated. Moreover, would they explain the obsessive revisiting of his critique of revolutionary *engagement* in fictional works spanning three decades?

It would be implausible to read Simon's (mis-) representation of Orwell back into the specific historical context of December 1936-May 1937 as an attack on the POUM position of 'revolution or fascism'. Or as a more general attack on what can broadly be termed 'trotskyite' or anarchist positions that prioritize social revolution - although these are certainly represented in *Les Géorgiques* as naïve in their failure to recognize the realities of power politics. In fact, Simon's critique also seems to extend to the Communists. In *Le Palace*, CP officialdom is

36. What is elided here is Thomas's criticism of the methods used by the PSUC to deal with those at ideological odds with them (1986, 708).

37. This seems to be a false contrast: O. is giving an account not of events but of a particular political position, and it is with this he is sympathising, not romanticising. In fact, Orwell qualifies this 'admission': 'I've given [in *Homage*] a more sympathetic account of the 'POUM' line that I actually felt, because I always thought they were wrong But I think there was

(probably) given an unsympathetic treatment in the figure of the Schoolmaster and *Les Géorgiques* also alludes negatively to the witch-hunt against the POUM and, in particular, to the activities of the Communist-dominated military police (the SIM) and their Russian trainers, the NKVD agents. The novel alludes to the dictation of Republican policy by Stalin, whose orders are transmitted via his political commissars to the Republic's President (pp. 356-57). The figure described in the latter passage could represent Largo Caballero, Prime Minister at the time of the May events.³⁸ In addition, the portrayal of the Republican leaders as the impotent puppets of the Communists follows on a description of the 'hereditary' hatred of the anarchist working classes for the Assault guards who represent the forces of law and order. This could be read as implying that the genuinely popular impetus to the Revolution is being thwarted by the Communist-controlled government.

In addition, the totalitarian conditions described as reigning in Barcelona - the detentions without trial and summary justice meted out by armed groups - are not limited to the time before the May events when Anarchist patrols dominated the city. The totalitarian situation being contrasted to the rule of law and order in England is that pertaining after the May events, when O. has fled Spain (*Les Géorgiques*, pp. 312-13).³⁹ The references to political murders and secret torture chambers would thus apply more to the activities of the Communist-dominated police during the purges.⁴⁰ Finally, Part Four contains a remarkable condemnation of the absolute political power enjoyed and symbolized by the NKVD agents now acting as advisors in Spain:

something in what they said, though no doubt their way of saying it was tiresome and provocative in the extreme' (quoted in Thomas 1986, p. 707, n. 4).

38. Thomas describes Largo as 'increasingly resentful of communist infiltration into the organs of state and of communist arrogance' (1986, pp. 646-74, especially 647).

39. See Thomas 1986, pp. 651-52 for a description of conditions in Barcelona under the control of the Anarchist patrols prior to the May crisis.

40. See Thomas 1986, p. 669 on the private prisons run by the SIM.

n'ayant rien d'autre à eux [...] que du pouvoir, ou [...] l'essence même du pouvoir, le détenant et l'exerçant non pas comme il (O..) avait jusqu'alors cru qu'il s'obtenait et s'exerçait, c'est-à-dire par ou pour la possession de richesses, en obligeant ceux qui ne possédaient rien à travailler pour eux, ou en dépossédant de leurs richesses des concurrents, mais un pouvoir sans retenue, sans ces entraves, ces limitations qu'apportent aux possesseurs de terres ou de machines la concurrence d'autres possesseurs de terres ou de machines. (see pp. 338-41)

Simon suggests that, whereas in a capitalist system premised on the notion of competition there are in-built checks on the concentration of power, under a totalitarian system like Communism, there is no counterbalance to state power. This is obviously a gross generalization regarding the non-communist Western system, particularly in its conflation of economic and political structures. However, it seems clear that Simon's critique of the abstract espousal of revolutionary theories is written from a position of disillusionment with Marxism and its (supposedly) inevitably totalitarian consequences, namely the experience of Soviet Communism.

In fact, this passage implies that the purges in which O. is caught up are simply a repeat performance of what has already occurred in Stalinist Russia: the Moscow Trials of the thirties. Simon's text appears to warn against the ever-present danger of totalitarianism, latent in any movement aiming at a radical transformation of social structures, and in particular it criticizes a historical naïvety or moral blindness on the part of the committed intellectual who espouses revolutionary Marxism. Ironically enough, however, Orwell was in fact one of the first voices to warn against the dangers of totalitarianism.⁴¹

The referent for the revolutionary writer in the novel seems not, in fact, to be the (actually anti-communist) Orwell so much as the communist Malraux. Simon makes this connection explicitly in his 1985 interview with Pugh when he says he finds it 'rather amusing that Orwell plays the same rather comic role of idolized hero-figure for a certain section of the English intelligentsia as Malraux did in France' (Pugh 1985, 9). This is perhaps why, finally, the critique of Orwell rings

41. 'Orwell had first formulated the concept of totalitarianism shortly after his escape from Spain. He argued that common factors were emerging in Stalinism and Nazism concerned with the retention and extension of power by the inner party elite. These lead the State to mobilise all society as if for perpetual and total war, a common process more important than the vestigial and nominally antagonistic ideologies' (Crick 1980, xx; see also Williams 1991, Chapters 6 and 7).

so hollow: he is, in fact, a straw man. Simon is concerned with Orwell, the English cultural icon, only in so far as he is perceived to be the mirror image of Malraux, the French one. Moreover, the real target of attack is not a particular individual, so much as a political discourse: that of the Marxist or fellow-travelling French intelligentsia. Orwell and Malraux are ciphers for a particular attitude towards politics and writing, or rather a particular way of articulating these two activities: they are chosen because, in relation to the Spanish conflict, they are regarded as the apotheosis of the *engagé* intellectual in their respective cultures.

Although there is no space to discuss this point here, the accuracy of Simon's representation of Malraux in this respect is also questionable. Manès Sperber comments that Malraux's 'literary fame' was from the beginning connected to 'his reputation as a political militant' (1976, 153). However, he asserts that Malraux's revolutionary sympathies were initially fuelled less by a knowledge of, and adherence to, Marxist theory, and more by the anti-colonialist sympathies developed through his experiences in Indochina. Secondly, Malraux's political commitment was above all part of an artistic and existential quest:

In seeking to discover the value of artistic creation, the meaning of a work of art and its lasting effect, Malraux poses the same question that drove him into revolutionary action and made him the author of exemplary revolutionary novels [...] Is it possible for man to change from a tool of destiny into its master? (1976, 164)

Finally, Malraux was himself never a member of the Communist Party and was subjected to a similar campaign of vilification as Orwell by French Communists and by fellow travelling intellectuals because of his anti-Stalinist stance during the 1940s (Sperber 1976, 153-4). Crick also links Orwell's rejection of totalitarianism to a critique being formulated, independently, by a series of 'political and literary intellectuals', among them Malraux (1980, xx).

Simon's attack on *Homage* seems not to be limited to the polemics of the thirties, fuelled by the rejection of political views held long ago, but, judging from the Pugh interview, is conceived as a form of cultural critique still relevant to positions espoused by the Left intelligentsia decades later. In the Chapsal interview (1962), Simon asserts that his representation of the Spanish Revolution

in *Le Palace* concerns the 'Comment c'est maintenant'; the reverberations of his past revolutionary experiences in his contemporary context (see Orr 1993, 162).

On the one hand, Simon sees the contradictions between abstract principles and concrete political practice or experience as an enduring source of fascination - he cites the example of Rousseau alongside that of L.S.M. (Pugh 1985, 4-5). On the other, he criticizes what he regards as the hypocrisy of those intellectuals who wish to occupy the moral high ground, but whose view of political morality is premised on wilful blindness to the complexities, contradictions and the sordid realities of *Realpolitik*. This is not a criticism directed solely at intellectuals on the Left. For instance, in the Pugh interview Simon refers to the Beirut bombing, criticising the language of moral outrage used in the French press to condemn the attack. What this discourse fails to address, in Simon's view, is that it is self-interest rather than moral principle which motivates the French presence in the Lebanon.

However, the danger with this position is that it reduces all politics to *Realpolitik*. Simon's attack on Orwell the *engagé* intellectual could also be symptomatic of a negation of his own complicity with a discourse he now rejects. Indeed, over-compensation might explain the ferocity of the attack on Orwell. However, this discourse of anti-commitment in general, and anti-Communism in particular, is not idiosyncratic to Simon's texts, but bears the traces of a wider intellectual and cultural context. In fact, this wider historical context could be just as determining to the writing of the novels as their autobiographical dimension (as Ricardou argues in relation to *Le Palace* with his notion of 'la situation de narration'). Simon's treatments of the Spanish revolution, and his discourse on revolution in general, seem to participate in a wider political and philosophical 'conversation' among postwar French intellectuals concerning 'the issue of communism - its practice, its meaning, its claims upon the future' (Judt 1992, 1). Britton has argued that it is significant that Simon emerged as a writer when 'the political climate of the progressive intelligentsia [...] in France was dominated by anti-Stalinism' (the late forties and the fifties) (1993, 4).

Judt analyses the precise contours of this generalised climate of 'anti-Stalinism' arguing that, in fact, Communism continued to wield enormous influence among French intellectuals as an ideal model of social and political organisation. He argues that this continued to be the case even though details of

Stalin's human rights abuses were available soon after the Moscow Show Trials, and had become public knowledge by the end of the forties. Despite this, the prestige enjoyed by Communism persisted, up to and well after Khrushchev's 1956 speech denouncing Stalin. Judt is concerned with what he regards as the moral blindness and wilful abdication of intellectual responsibility displayed by a wide category of intellectual fellow travellers (including Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Emmanuel Mounier). He accuses all of them of ignoring the reality of what was occurring in the communist sphere of influence, and as such, he follows in the footsteps of Raymond Aron's 1955 critique *L'Opium des intellectuels*.⁴²

Judt's account is particularly useful because it argues that the origins of the post-war *engagement* with communism were complex and overdetermined. To summarise, this *engagement* was not an aberration in recent French history, determined solely by the events of a particular historical moment, but a manifestation and consequence of embedded structures within French political and intellectual life. Firstly, the negative experience of democratic liberalism under the Third Republic; secondly, the black-and-white vision of politics which emerged from the Occupation; and, finally, more *longue durée* factors, such as the fascination exercised by the 1789 Revolution and its discourse of revolutionary violence on the French intellectual imagination.

Interesting echoes of the various strands of this intellectual-political matrix as defined and explored by Judt can be found in Simon's novelistic discourse. Significantly, Britton sees Simon's political pessimism as 'untypical' of his intellectual contemporaries, asserting that although he shared their 'anti-Stalinism', he also considered the attempt to form a 'new [non-communist] left' to be futile. *Les Géorgiques* critiques the conception of ethical intervention through intellectual production: it is thus a rejection of one of the dominant discourses in the post-war French context, that of Sartrian *engagement*, as Britton makes clear (1993, 6).

However, according to Britton, although Simon's pessimism is rooted in his personal experience of *engagement* in Spain, it is also determined by another strand of his discourse: his conception of human nature or the human condition as

42. Aron attempted to debunk the mythology of Communism and its hold on the intellectual imagination of what he called the 'communisant' European intellectuals.

essentially unchanging, with violence as an ineradicable part of that condition. Thus while it makes sense to read Simon's obsessional reworking of his Spanish material as being articulated in relation to the persistent moral dominance of communism in French post-war intellectual circles, his rejection of this discourse is inextricably tied up with a more generalised critique of longer historical pedigree.

According to Judt, the PCF represented itself as the inheritor and defender of French revolutionary Republicanism. Simon has on many occasions described his rejection of what he characterises as the 'Enlightenment' inheritance: notably, a belief in human rationality as the motor of historical change, and a confidence in the inevitability of social progress. Britton comments:

He has said that the most crucial feature of the end of the war was the discovery of the Nazi concentration camps, since this revelation of the essential barbarity of mankind effectively disqualifies any political or philosophical system of belief: "In my view the biggest thing was Auschwitz. I'm not a sociologist, or a historian, or a philosopher, but after Auschwitz ideologies collapse, the whole of humanism begins to look like a farce". (Britton 1993, 4)⁴³

Interesting here are, firstly, Simon's disclaimers. They reinforce the impression that a generalised post-war crisis in humanism - what he terms 'the collapse of ideologies' - and his own response to it, are self-evident and do not themselves constitute a particular ideological choice. In fact, a wide range of possible responses to such a perceived crisis could be envisaged. For instance, Althusser's response to the 'terrible education of deeds' to which he was subjected after four years in a Nazi prison camp was almost diametrically opposed. He did not reject the meta-narrative of Marxism, but joined the PCF after the war, and attempted to reformulate Marx's theories in the light of Freudian theory (see Elliot 1987, 63-64).

Secondly, the reverberations of this crisis as perceived by Simon are not limited to those of his texts written within the postwar period to which Judt's study refers (1945-1956), for instance, *Le Sacre*. Simon's targets in *Les Géorgiques*, published in 1981, continue to be both the discourse of the *engagé* intellectual and a more generalized, romantic-triumphalist discourse epitomised

by Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution Française*. Indeed, Judt argues that the intellectual practice of the postwar not only contains 'echoes of earlier French and European experiences' but also 'the seeds of our present condition' (1992, 9). Thus it is interesting to speculate in passing on the possible links between Simon's discourse and that of those post-68 writers associated with 'la nouvelle philosophie', such as the work of Bernard-Henri Lévy. Judt sums up the discourse of the latter group as blaming 'the great holistic thinkers of the late Enlightenment (Rousseau, Hegel, and so on)' for the origins of 'totalitarianism and totalitarian styles of thought upon' (1992, 239). Similarly, in his article on *L'Education sentimentale*, Prendergast links the depiction of revolution 'as horror story' in the work of the *nouveaux philosophes* with their revisionist view of 'the French revolutionary legacy' (1992, 239).

Les Géorgiques can be read as making similar moves to those outlined by Judt, namely characterising abstract philosophical systems as 'totalising' and linking them to concrete instances of political totalitarianism. The next section will briefly examine Simon's rejection of Enlightenment 'meta-narratives' before moving on to discuss whether, while criticizing meta-narratives, the text does not posit its own, alternative meta narrative.

History with a capital H

As stated earlier, Simon's representation of historiography seems partly conditioned by a sceptical attitude as to the ability of writing to successfully reconstruct – and especially communicate - past experience. This sceptical strand runs throughout his œuvre, turning on the fact that there is always an inevitable gap between lived experience and any retrospective attempt to communicate such experiences - except, perhaps, to those who have had a similar experience (see p. 47). The stories of O. and the cavalryman both highlight the gap between the war as perceived on the ground as a series of contingent events ('un incompréhensible jeu' p.106), and the meanings assigned (retrospectively) to such events within 'les pages des manuels d'Histoire'.

43. See also Brewer 1995, xx-xxi, for a brief discussion of the relationship between 'the end of ideology' and the critique of representation in postwar France.

In addition, it is implied that such narratives ignore the social or human aspect of such events. By focusing on the experiences of the individual soldier and on the collective suffering that such events produce, the cavalryman's narrative points to the ethical inadequacy of any discourse which effectively dismisses human suffering by reference to 'historical laws' or to a totalising, greater plan (p. 131).⁴⁴

Furthermore, it has been argued that Simon sees the syntactic and morphological structures of writing - particularly but not exclusively those of a conventional realist discourse - as inherently alien to the real shape of experience, and this radical scepticism as to the epistemological purchase of writing underpins the critique of *Homage*. However, paradoxically, as shown by Britton, Simon's critique of Orwell also seems logically to rest on the possibility of producing a 'truer' kind of representation. Thus Simon's texts are held in a tension between a basically representational discourse, one which privileges 'a specifically [...] visual representation of "reality", whose power is ensured by its source in the desire invested in vision' and 'a dimension of textual activity that [...] subverts the representational elements' (1987, 67).

A similar tension can be detected in Simon's conception of history. Britton argues that there are three 'related but conflicting' aspects to this conception in his texts: 'history is presented figuratively as an empty space; history is said to exist in abstract and generalized terms; and history is not shown in action because it is invisible' (1987, 163). But is 'history' conceived of as having an extra-discursive existence, or as the product of a discursive construct? According to Britton, Simon does not really think there is no such thing as extra-textual historical processes. However, his discourse conflates the visible and the intelligible: since historical processes are not immediately present to the individual perceiving consciousness, they are intrinsically unintelligible (since 'unrepresentable' or rather 'un-visualizable').⁴⁵ In opposition to this stands a category of human experience represented by Simon as eternal and universal (for

44. Obviously this representation of war be traced back to earlier texts such as Stendahl's *La Chartreuse de Parme* which depicts the battle of Waterloo from Fabrice's marginal perspective.

45. Britton compares Simon's view of historical processes to Lacan's tripartite conceptual model of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. Since 'History' - in the sense of a logical and comprehensible process of cause and effect, or a coherent unity (1987,145) - is not

instance, war, coitus, the act of exchange) and which Britton terms 'non-historical'.⁴⁶ The interest of Britton's analysis here is her general point that the representation of history emerges from a phenomenological realist discourse, complicated by an emphasis on textuality to an extent which, as has been seen, seems to contradict its phenomenological realist suppositions. Thus the '(un)representability' of historical processes marks a point of aporia within the texts.

Simon's equation of the non-visual/non-immediately perceptible with the non-existent is determining, as regards the textual representation of 'the relationship between history and the individual consciousness' (Britton 1987, 145-46) but also problematic. He suggests not just that the subjective experience of historical events is unintelligible because there is a radical incommensurability between individual experience and any kind of retrospective account, but that no intelligible pattern of cause and effect can be determined behind historical events. Thus rational social or political intervention becomes arbitrary or even impossible.

As Britton points out, Simon's attack on revolutionary *engagement* is not a rigorous critique of Hegelian Marxist theories of historical development. 'Marxism' as a historical theory is shorthand for a more vaguely conceived model of historical development, what Britton calls 'the humanist conception of history' (1985, 96) or 'liberal rationalism' (1987, 150). Simon equates Marxism with Enlightenment thought because both share a belief in human progress and rationality but also simply because both are abstract theoretical systems. In Marxist theory 'the historical process cannot be immediately accessible to the ideologically bound world-views of its participants' (1987, 151) and thus the causes of historical events can only become intelligible through a process of intellectual labour. In Britton's view, this is the prime reason for Simon's critique, since, in his discourse, intelligibility is not the end product of an abstract process of conceptualisation but the product of sensory (primarily visual)

immediately transparent, or visible, it can be equated with the Lacanian concept of the real as 'that which the subject always 'misses' [...], what remains inaccessible, resists meaning' (ibid).
 46. This is seen as occupying a similar conceptual space to Lacan's imaginary. Finally, writing in Simon's texts corresponds to the symbolic in Lacanian theory. However, Britton admits that the latter move is problematic since, in Simon's discourse, writing is often represented as opaque and non-signifying, and thus in Lacanian terms would rather belong, along with history, in the category of the real.

perception. However, Simon's opposition to Marxism appears to centre less on its theoretical tenets and more on its practical consequences, as shown in Spain (Britton 1987, 147; also Carroll 1989, pp. 38-39).

The linking of the Revolution to a particular view of, or received discourse on, Enlightenment thought is clear in *Les Géorgiques* in the parallels drawn between experiences of L.S.M. and O.. However, the allusions to eighteenth-century views of history in Simon's texts are not only 'confused', as Britton says, but crudely over-generalising. His main target of criticism appears to be Rousseau - *Du Contrat social* is mentioned as one of L.S.M.'s passions (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 446) - but the latter's writings are also conflated with those of the other *philosophes*.⁴⁷

However, while on the one hand ironising mechanistic notions of inevitable historical progress, Simon's text equally constructs a fatalistic discourse that, in emphasizing the inexorability of historical processes, performs the same sleight of hand as any comparison between the latter and scientific processes. On p. 131, war is compared to a ceremony or a ritual determined by 'laws' that are as rigid as mathematical formulae.⁴⁸ Likewise, the *débâcle* and, in particular, the prison camp are represented as limit situations of extreme physical deprivation in which, like the hunted O., man is reduced to an animal existence. This mocks abstract notions of human dignity and rationality, and yet this limit existence is also represented as paradigmatic; as the most authentic gauge of 'the human condition' (see pp. 98 and 205-15).

Phillippe Roger contends that the treatment of history in *Les Géorgiques* marks a departure from earlier texts. In *Le Palace*, the notion of an objective meaning to historical events, particularly a humanistic or socialist one, is vilified and ridiculed. However, history in this sense of a meta-narrative is also denied altogether (Roger 1988, 184). *Les Géorgiques*, while still vilifying the 'humanist conception' of history, no longer denies history's objective existence. On the

47. While there is no scope here to explore Simon's representation of Enlightenment thought or Enlightenment conceptions of history in any great depth, Suzanne Gearhart (1984) shows that the term 'Enlightenment' does not refer to a unity, and needs itself to be historicised. The problem with using a term like 'eighteenth century rationalism' is that it tends to obscure the complexity and heterogeneity of the concept of *lumières*. For a critical analysis of Simon's representation of Enlightenment thought see Britton 1987, pp. 147-51.

48. See also the mechanistic image employed on p. 107. Brewer argues that such images are employed not to promote the notion of some underlying, universal order but, on the contrary, to

contrary, it is represented as ‘dotée d’une logique indéchiffrable, divine, bien autrement complexe que les élucubrations philosophico-politiques de O. et de ses pareils’ (1988, 187).

The theological tone of Roger’s language seems misplaced, since it suggests a level of transcendent meaning and design. In fact, the authorial voice is characterized rather by a stoical acceptance of historical disaster. However, his account highlights the fact that the text does not deny that there *are* principles of historical intelligibility. If historical events are represented in *Les Géorgiques* as a temporal sequence which, while not being meaningful in any transcendent sense, is not random, then what kinds of causal relationships are implicitly or explicitly envisaged?

The text suggests the determinants of historical events in fact exist not at the rational or conscious level of social and political determinations, but at an irrational or ‘deep’ level. The first fundamental or determining relationship concerns instinctual or unconscious determinations – or rather pseudo-determinations, since these relationships are envisioned within the text as being beyond any intervention, and thus more a matter of ‘fate’ or ‘destiny’. The text refers to a category of human experience as being eternal: murder, coitus and barter (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 173). Britton also discusses how ‘errance’ is described as part of the human condition (‘les lois immémoriales de l’errance et du pillage’, *Les Géorgiques*, p. 213; see also pp. 361-62). Again, this connotes repetitious movement without progress:

Movement that never achieves anything definitively, has no definitive goal [...] and is in fact nothing but a continuous process of displacement; [...] *l’errance* undercuts the rational progress of history, and in so doing, it also highlights the dominance of geography, of a spatial rather than a temporal apprehension of reality. (1985, 97)⁴⁹

Humankind’s ‘primitive’ or instinctual impulses (the ‘passions élémentaires’ referred to in *Le Sacre*, pp. 264-66) or an ahistorical ‘human condition’ are

denote ‘orderings for which no general or absolute order may be designated’ (1995, 68).

49. Britton later elaborates upon this concept, adding a psycho-analytical perspective where the figure of the mother symbolises a concept of time that is ‘essentially non-historical’ (1987, Chapter Six, especially 159-60). Fiona Cox links the notion of eternal exile or movement to the fate of Aeneas, another frequent Virgilian intertextual reference (1999, 184). The importance of space and place over time in the novel is discussed below.

revealed in their pure form in situations of extreme physical and psychological deprivation. Examples of this are the soldiers' experiences during the *débâcle* and in the prison camp, and O.'s experience on the run (see pp. 280-89, 336, 343-44, and 346).⁵⁰ The description of the prisoners of war is also interwoven with a description of the gypsies in the cinema (pp. 205-215). On pp. 209-210, we are given a powerful and dramatic description of the appalling conditions in the camp, and their de-humanising effects on the prisoners. For instance:

Les cinq ou six hommes [...] semblables maintenant à des bêtes affamées, aux visages grisâtres, aux yeux vigilants, inquiets, fourbes, impitoyables (parce que la vigilance, la fourberie, la dureté, sont là les seuls moyens de survie), avec des têtes de voleurs ou plutôt (pire que des voleurs) de vaincus (certains du reste voleurs de profession, petits escrocs, ou maquereaux, représentant (comment dire?) le gratin, l'aristocratie de la baraque) [...] chacun solitaire, ils sentiraient sur eux, innombrables, comme un miniscule et léger fourmillement, comme si l'été, le temps, l'*Histoire*, pourrissaient eux-mêmes, se décomposaient, se résumaient à cet invisible, immonde et vorace grouillement qui s'attaquaient à eux tout vivants, gisant là, impuissants et trempés de sueur [...] sauvages, humiliés, semblables, avec les tendons saillants de leurs nuques amaigries, à ces animaux qu'on peut voir dans les zoos, ces oiseaux captifs aux cous déplumés derrière leurs grillages, outragés, accrochés par leur serres sur des branches mortes, blanchies de fientes croûteuses, piétinant leur propre ordure, dans une odeur de fauves et de déjections animales. (pp. 209-211)

This is, firstly, an ethical protest against the brutalisation of the prisoners (the reference to captive birds is a differentiating comparison). Again, their suffering calls into question any notion of inevitable historical progress: the fact that the prisoners' quality of life is dependent on the life-cycles of a tiny parasite ironizes the notion of there being a transcendent meaning to history. Indeed, any sense of temporal movement seems to be denied within the frozen and meaningless rituals of camp life.

Yet camp life also strips down the prisoners's psyches to reveal a primitive bedrock of human nature. In his 1985 interview, Pugh asks Simon

50. However, the allusions to such experiences as being 'universal' or 'eternal' does not mean the text suggests there is no historical change, only no progress. O.'s experience of war is not an exact repetition of L.S.M.'s, as the attempt to differentiate the experiences of L.S.M. and O. textually makes clear. Cox also argues that, paradoxically, Simon's reworkings and reappropriations of the Orpheus myth imply that the script of events is already written, and yet that new variations on the same theme are possible (1999, 187-88).

whether he believes 'it is necessary to have experience of violence, in war for example, to have an accurate description of the human condition' (Pugh 1985, 10). Simon replies affirmatively, citing the experience of the prison camp, along with that of extreme poverty, as situations in which 'human nature is revealed in all its primitive brutality' (ibid). In addition, there is a deliberate formal and thematic overlap of the prison camp episode with the description of the 'primitives tribus' or 'horde barbare' of gypsies in the cinema. The gypsies are described as follows:

la perpétuation, la délégation vivante de l'humanité originelle, inchangée, les spécimens inaltérés et inaltérables, rebelles aux siècles, au progrès, aux successives civilisations et au savon, venus tout droit du fond de l'Asie [...] sortis tels quels des entrailles du monde ou plutôt (eux, leur puanteur, leur moiteur, leur inépuisable fécondité, leur élémentarité) comme ses entrailles elles-mêmes, étalées, encore fumantes, tant bien que mal contenues. (pp. 208-209)

The tenor of this passage, in which the gypsies are described as 'immune to history' could be partly ironic, as the bathetic reference to soap suggests. However, as Prendergast comments in relation to *L'Education sentimentale*, a stock trope of nineteenth century political and literary discourse (democratic or reactionary) was to compare the masses to an elementary force of nature (1992, 246). Simon's use of this kind of image could be ironic and self-reflexive, intended like the descriptions of the Spanish *sans-culottes* to mark his distance from an over-romanticising and idealising discourse. However, there is an implicit ambiguity involved in using such tropes: ultimately, they exoticize and fetishize a category that is the product of a particular set of class relations (in the case of the masses) and which can easily be recuperated by a reactionary politics:

From the comparison with elemental nature, it is but a step to the characteristic naturalization of the Parisian masses by way of the notion of 'mob' regression to a condition of uncontrollable animality - the crowd as inarticulate or violent beast, or as 'bête' in that double sense of both animality and stupidity which particularly exercised Flaubert. (Prendergast 1992, 246-47)

The literate, ironic nod contained in the description of the gypsies does not negate the fact that Simon's category of the primitive coincides neatly with a particular

sociological group which, historically, has been one of the most under-resourced and marginalised in terms of both political and cultural representation. In fact, the main effect of such tropes is to reinforce an essentialist view of human nature, as the cultural and historical determinations of such categories are emptied out. In other words, the very historicity of this kind of representation is ignored, and it reads more as a straightforward instance of (reactionary) *doxa*.

Similarly, the image of aimless wandering or 'errance' in *Les Géorgiques* can be linked to nineteenth-century political discourse. It is one of the tropes of the uncontrollable and the incalculable which Prendergast identifies as lying 'at the heart of ruling class perceptions and fears of the revolutionary situation' (1992, 249). A similar form of endoxal logic operates in the representation of the POW camp. While the text acknowledges that camp life perpetuates the social forms found in civilian and military life – although invertedly, with the criminal underclass forming the aristocracy – this kind of hierarchical structure is naturalized, represented as an integral part of the 'degree zero' of humanity.

According to Britton, the other aspect of the human condition revealed in camp life is economic exchange. The prisoners engage in barter using the only form of currency they possess, their cigarette butts:

Since Marx, we are used to thinking of changing forms of economic exchange as one of the touchstones of historical development; yet for Simon there is no essential difference between a feudal dowry system and the speculation of the stock exchange because both involve the possession and exchange of people: regiments in the first case ([*Les Géorgiques*] 369) and the armies of the unemployed in the second (122). (Britton 1985, 97; see also 1987, 143)

Again, this kind of levelling discourse could stem from an iconoclastic and ethical impulse: 'exchange' is described as 'ahistorical' to suggest processes of *unequal* economic exchange (exploitation) that have continued over centuries. However, this is still to put a crudely anthropologising – and thus 'naturalizing' – gloss on a huge historical variety of economic forms. It also monolithically erases their historicity: what status do we accord to Simon's equation of feudal economic arrangements with twentieth century capitalist economies?

To move onto the second category of determinations alluded to in the texts: these can be called, schematically, *external* forces or forces not located within or between human agents. Critics including Orr and Britton have

highlighted that the title of *Les Géorgiques* points to Virgil's *Georgics* as its paradigmatic literary intertext and, etymologically, to a narrative constructed around 'a series of relationships to the land' (Britton 1985, 95). However, they also emphasize that Simon's reworking of the classical intertext departs radically from the ethos of the original. Roger argues that novel is not 'la parabole d'une complémentarité cosmique entre travaux de terre et labeurs de la guerre', since this would ignore the parodic and bitter tone of Simon's appropriation of the classical model (Roger 1988, 182). For Orr too, Simon echoes both the topoi and structures of Virgil's text to parodic effect. For the rural idyll, with its thematics of order, harmony and cyclical regeneration, he substitutes a narrative stressing disorder, familial and social strife, and repetition without progress on the level of human affairs (1993, 25-33).⁵¹

As Britton has said, the prime determining force in *Les Géorgiques* appears to be the influence of geography, which both moulds, and interacts with, what are regarded as the elementary modes of human behaviour. Geography is represented mainly in visual terms, with repeated references to maps, ranging from the map and the globe in the opening description of the drawing of L.S.M., to the map of his estate that L.S.M. always carries (1987, 151). However, such references also problematize any clear-cut distinction between the categories of 'history' and 'geography' or 'the temporal' and 'the spatial'. They remind the reader that maps are both informed by, and render in a material form, a prior, often unacknowledged conceptual division of space and spatial relations. This is not 'natural', but the product of particular epochs and even ideologies.⁵² In other words, geography itself is a discursive object, and as such subject to historical and cultural variation - as, indeed, Simon's text also acknowledges when highlighting that the Revolution creates a 'new geography'.

This kind of ambiguity lies at the heart of Simon's discourse on history in *Les Géorgiques*. On the one hand, the text foregrounds the historicity and discursivity of 'geography' and yet, ultimately, the latter is accorded a metaphysical status. Equally, Simon's ironic allusions to the Virgilian archetype

51. However, Cox sees the reworking of the Orpheus theme as the main, concrete Virgilian reference and describes some of the parallels Orr draws as 'strained' (1999, 177-78).

52. The obvious example is the aggrandised representation of Europe - and in particular the British Isles - on maps of the world prior to the second half of the twentieth century. This

imply a historical disjunction between the two texts which means that 'nature' and our relation to it can be viewed as a process of renewal and harmonious interdependence or its opposite. Yet the cycles of nature are also represented as an unchanging, deeper logic which ironize the transience of human events and experiences (see for instance *Les Géorgiques*, p. 462).⁵³

Finally, the text refers to the inexorable laws of a 'wired-in' physical order as are found in the genetically-encoded patterns and structures of non-human life forms: 'une ordonnance impossible à détecter mais d'une nature aussi imprescriptible, aussi mathématique, que celles qui président aux spirales des coquilles, organisent en étoiles les cristaux de neige ou structurent les plus infimes particules vivantes' (*Les Géorgiques*, p. 131). In the context of the description of the *débâcle*, this could be ironic. O.'s story also contains a sarcastic allusion to the facile view that events are determined by 'l'interne logique de la matière' (p. 352), which lets the military and political elites ultimately responsible for the disasters of war (such as the *débâcle*) off the hook. Here, the 'laws of matter' are offered as one possible candidate alongside two different but similarly fatalistic meta-narratives ('*Histoire*' and 'le destin'), and obviously form part of Simon's critique of any meta-narrative attempt which trivializes traumatic human events such as war by attributing them to 'laws of history'.

Simon's novel focuses on the suffering and the de-humanisation of the individuals caught up in world-historical events (for instance, the refugees described on pp. 361-62). His interviews suggest that he is acutely aware of this dimension of human suffering and loss, which is often erased from conventional political narratives (see Pugh 1985). On the other hand, the sufferings of the refugees are universalised. Like the gypsies or the Spanish militiamen, they are

reveals centuries of eurocentricism in Western geographical and political discourse, which the Peters Projection is intended to address.

53. Brewer argues against the notion that Simon represents history in terms of cyclical repetition, stating that this view is identified with Uncle Charles. As such: 'it is not *the* privileged narrative model of nature, revolution and history in Simon, because that model is itself situated and bordered by other narratives of legacy: that of divisions within the law (opposing brother and brother, the general and the particular, the public and the private); of history as the family's repression of an intimate yet historical truth (regicide generating fratricide); and of the problematic status of the legacy for the men and women who receive it' (65). However, in my view, the theme of history as cyclical repetition runs throughout Simon's novels and this kind of meta-narrative cannot be easily reconciled with the notion also present in the texts of history as 'divergence and difference' (Brewer 1995, 70).

represented as an undifferentiated mass and as the passive victims of 'natural' disasters such as wars or revolutions, or of forces beyond human intervention (here, 'quelque inapaisable malédiction').⁵⁴ This fits the alternative meta-narrative offered by the novel, in which the comparison with the physical laws underpinning the form of shells alludes to the determining influence of non-human forces in historical events, forces which are 'all-powerful and entirely impersonal' (Britton 1987, 143).

The location of historical determinants at a primitive or pre-rational level, or their transposition onto a different plane altogether (geography, the laws of physics) makes history appear inaccessible to rational intervention. In particular, the political actions of individuals are explicitly de-rationalised by being represented as pathological, symptoms of a particular psycho-biography (in the case of the intellectual revolutionaries such as O.) or an attempt to escape their own existential loneliness. Like the prisoners cramped together in the barracks who are 'chacun solitaire', this essential loneliness seems to be intrinsic to Simon's view of 'the human condition'.

Similarly, collectivities or collective political action are represented negatively: again, the real motivations underlying them are located on the level of primitive impulses and collectivities operate as an unthinking mass (the militiamen, the gypsies). The description of the refugees may communicate the pathos of their condition, but there is no sense of any potential empowerment or even solidarity among such groups. Ultimately, the possibility of human progress contained within utopian political ideologies is denied. Individuals appear powerless to do anything but suffer history, and the only attitude left to them is the quietist acquiescence of the refugees and the poor: 'cette méticulosité, cette indécourageable ferveur et cette infinie patience des pauvres' (p. 362).⁵⁵

54. One is reminded, ironically, of Williams' criticism of Orwell for his objectifying representation of the masses in 1984: 'if the tyranny of 1984 ever finally comes, one of the major elements of the ideological preparation will have been just this way of seeing 'the masses' [etc.]' (1991, 79).

55. In *Le Sacre*, the stepfather's narrative posits that any project of radical social and political change is flawed - not so much because social change is undesirable but because what such projects ignore or misrecognize are the real motors of historical change. The true principle of intelligibility in historical events is not found at the level of political theory and conscious activism - particularly not at the level of analysis and abstract modelling -but at that of universally-conceived 'passions élémentaires' present within human beings (see in particular, pp. 264-66). Thus: 'les [...] grands bouleversements se font non avec les idées, les théories, les mots,

To summarize, the status of Simon's concept of history in *Les Géorgiques* seems contradictory - or undecidable, as Britton argues (1987, 163). On the one hand, 'History with a capital H' is mocked, on the other an equally relentless form of causal relationship is implied. In this sense, Britton's suggestion that historical processes are represented figuratively in the text as an 'empty space', or as 'unrepresentable' does not seem strictly accurate. The figure of 'history' *does* have content in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*.⁵⁶ It also has a particular narrative shape, one of temporal movement and displacement, but within an essentially closed series (the image conveyed by the epigraph to *Le Palace*).

Moreover, the structure of a political 'rite of passage' underpins the stories of the protagonists of *Le Sacre* and *Le Palace*, and can be related to a secularised version of the biblical notion of the fall, from the realm of idealised, theoretical commitment into the sordid realities of political pragmatism. The revolutionary activities of both L.S.M. and O. follow this structure more literally in that they both come under revolutionary suspicion and 'fall from grace'.⁵⁷ The pervasiveness of this structure in Simon's texts, combined with meta-narratorial comments on the unchanging motors of history, highlights an implicit contradiction in the texts which is illuminated by comparing and contrasting Simon's representation of revolution with Prendergast's reading of Flaubert's representation of 1848.

Prendergast argues that, in *L'Education sentimentale*, firstly, the events of 1848 are represented not as a coherent narrative sequence, but as a fragmentary and confused series of images described through a distanced, indeed alienated narrative vision. This works against conventions of narrative and historical intelligibility by presenting 'history as a sort of blur', with indeterminacy existing at the heart of historical experience (1992, 241). Secondly, Flaubert represents revolution in ironic mode, as distinct from the two modes in which it is conventionally represented, the epic or the tragic (terms taken from Raymond Williams). Prendergast uses the Flaubertian term *le grotesque triste* to define this

mais avec les sentiments, les passions élémentaires, simples, toujours et partout les mêmes: l'espoir, la haine, l'amour [...] la peur, la faim [...] la colère, le désir'.

56. This is why Brewer, for instance, takes issue with Britton's assertion that for Simon history occupies the space of the invisible. Brewer argues that 'there is no nonhistory in Simon, because everything is historical, especially the question of land and the modalities of exchange that underlie war, legacies and revolution' (1995, 63).

new mode, which refers to 'a complex range of negative attitudes on a spectrum from the satiric to the melancholic' (1992, 241).

Thus it appears at first that Flaubert's novel endorses the viewpoint of those characters who regard the events of 1848 as showing 'history revealed as farce, in the double sense of both theatrical routine and pointless gesture, history as joke'. In particular, this perspective sees 1848 as 'the "empty" recapitulation of the myths and symbols of 1789, simulacrum without content, repetition as travesty (the opposite of Michelet's dream of an active, transforming repetition)' (1992, 242). There are here definite parallels between Flaubert's representation of revolution, according to Prendergast's reading, stressing indeterminacy in historical events, and questioning the (retrospective) ordering of fragmentary, chaotic images into a coherent and meaningful narrative sequence, and Simon's discourse. The term *grotesque triste* seems to fit well Simon's representation of revolution in both *Le Palace* and *Les Géorgiques*. Images of empty theatricality, and of comic and even absurd incongruity between form and content abound in *Le Palace* (for instance, in the figures of the *cireurs*). In addition, the notion of history as 'fracture' and 'débâcle' applies to both the form and content of Simon's representation of the Spanish Revolution, the cavalryman's experience of war, and the representation of 1789 in LSM's story.⁵⁷ Finally, the cynical narrative voice on Revolution associated with the figures of Ceccaldi and the American in *Le Sacre* and *Le Palace*, and, in *Les Géorgiques* with the rewriting of Orwell's account, approach the 'stance of transcendent dispassionateness' on events identified by Prendergast with Flaubert's novel (1992, p. 246).

However, according to Prendergast, the actual content and structure of the narrative in *L'Education sentimentale* complicates such a straightforwardly revisionist, anti-Micheletian interpretation. The view of 'history and revolution as 'a sad and sorry joke' (1992, 243) was, by the time Flaubert wrote his text, itself a received discourse - a new *doxa* - on Revolution (after all, the form without content of 1848 was Marx's point in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*). In addition, the use of the 'blague' can be relativised to its social and political uses within the discourses of groups within the novel. While the 'cult of the blague' is

57. L.S.M. is sent to Strasbourg while O. fares even worse, forced to flee for his life (see pp. 248-56 & 263-80 respectively).

58. Simon himself denies that he represents historical events as either repetition or farce (Pugh 1985, 12).

historically linked to a reactionary view of politics, it can also bear the traces of a nineteenth century radical view of 'popular laughter as a contestatory political force' (1992, 246). Or within the same reactionary discourse, the *blague* can be less 'a method of demystification' than a 'a symptom of political impotence'.

Prendergast's conclusion is that, in fact, no 'meta'-position on revolution can be unequivocally read out of Flaubert's text, since the narrative also caricatures the position of 'transcendent dispassionateness' on which the vision of revolution as farce rests. The proliferation of narrative points of view, plus the slipperiness of terms, means it is impossible to distinguish a non-ironised position from which to interpret events (1992, 245). In contrast, in Simon's representation of revolution, this kind of infinite regress of narrative viewpoints on the revolution does not occur. The distanced, ironic view of revolution as a farce does not undergo the same subversion as the romantic, heroising view it is intended to counter.

Moreover, what Prendergast's reading shows in relation to *L'Education sentimentale* is that the representation of history and revolution as farce is predicated on a structure of endless repetition. In both generic and ideological terms, it is 'proleptically retrospective': 'Its "surprises" assured in advance, farce predicts, and even secures, outcomes by way of a jaundiced relationship to the past, and as such can be said to stage an expanded version of the dictum *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*' (1992, 248). The narrative indeterminacy operating in Flaubert's text means it does not repeat 'the predictive, teleological structures of a knowledge secured entirely in advance' (ibid). The future is not part of a closed series but, like the present, open-ended, and thus the effect of eternal repetition is seen as rhetorical, the product of a particular narrative construction. It is precisely this form of narrative closure that is effected by Simon's texts. Carroll argues in relation to *Le Palace* that the 'crisis of representation' the novel enacts means that 'history and fiction be conceived as open rather than closed processes or forms' and that representation is 'unbounded by any unique origin or telos' (1982, 111).

It is true that narrative indeterminacy is championed on the level of the representation of the immediate experience of the subject caught up in the revolutionary situation, which, indeed, is seen as challenging the closure of the ordered and coherent retrospective account. However, on the semantic level of all three texts, there is no indeterminacy as concerns the negative representation of the revolutionary experience, or its (constantly reiterated) meaning as *débâcle* and/or farcical reiteration.

Simon's texts challenge progressive meta-narratives, ironising the notion that there is a telos to historical events in the positive sense of, for instance, progress towards a socialist utopia. Yet his own textual treatments of revolution do not do away with teleology, but instead posit their own eternal, universal — and universally negative — outcome.⁵⁹

59. As Carroll himself comments (1982, 39), Simon posits a 'negativity' at the origin of history which 'continually conflicts with the positivity of the present'.

Chapter Four

Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed how Simon's critique of *Homage* and of political *engagement* in *Les Géorgiques* involves in part a textualist critique of what he sees as the realist premises of historical writing, combined with an explicit rejection of progressive 'meta-narratives'. This Chapter will explore the anti-realist strand in Marsé's representation of the Civil War, with reference to *Si te dicen* and *La muchacha*.

Marsé's texts do not imply a complex, underlying vision of history of the kind as Simon's texts do. However, they do involve a subversion of notions of narrative authority and reliability, particularly in the case of *Si te dicen*. The first question in this chapter is thus the following: in highlighting the constructed nature of accounts of the past, and in alerting us to issues of narrative perspective and bias, what are Marsé's targets? Does Marsé's fiction function principally as a form of oblique historiography, presenting history from the perspective of the *vencidos* and challenging the misrepresentations of official Francoist historiography? In doing so, does he also cast doubt on the possibility of ever producing an 'objective' account of such an ideologically-contested set of events as the Civil War?

Secondly, does the 'anti-realist' element of Marsé's texts implicitly or explicitly involve a more general critique of the realist premises of conventional historiography, as in Simon's texts? In other words, do they call into question the referential status of historical discourse *per se*? This in turn presupposes a further question. If we accept the post-structuralist assertion that historiography is 'subject to the whole range of questions that surround interpretation, representation and narrative in any form' (Young 1990, 22), what does this entail for the production and transmission of the historical memory of the Civil War? Do Marsé's texts explicitly or implicitly address the political or ethical effects of this deconstructive turn in the specific historical and cultural context in which *Si te dicen* and *La muchacha* are written?

Si te dicen que caí: a 'limit text'?

Si te dicen can be read referentially, as stated in Chapter Two, and also, due to its formally experimental and intertextual character, as a 'meta-fictional' text. One effect of the complex narrative structure of the text is to blur the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction' (Labanyi 1989, 138), and Chapter Two showed how this instability is generated. Firstly, by the formal and thematic importance given to *storytelling*, in particular through the use of the *aventi* form, which obviously affects narrative focalization. Secondly, through the blurring or doubling of the identity of most of the characters. Thirdly, through the (often unmarked) shifts between different time periods on both a macro- and a micro-level. Fourthly, through the numerous intertextual allusions to the characters, plots and generic conventions of popular fiction and film and, finally, through the frequent lack of conventional punctuation, which makes it difficult to distinguish shifts between different focalizers on and between the various levels of the narrative.

The confusion of the boundaries of referential discourse and fictional discourse through the techniques alluded to above (and particularly by the foregrounding of the *aventi*, where the boys turn themselves and other inhabitants of the *barrio* into the protagonists of their own stories) means that the original edition of the novel foregrounds what Jonathan Culler calls 'fourth-level *vraisemblance*'. In *Structuralist Poetics*, Culler divides the process of 'naturalisation' or *vraisemblablisation* that occurs when we read a text into five categories or levels.¹ Level (1) is the socially-given text of what we call 'the real world'. Culler quotes Stephen Heath's definition of this primary naturalising order as 'the text of the natural attitude of a society (the text of *l'habitude*)'. Since this is entirely familiar, it is diffuse and unrecognised as such (1975, 40). Level (2) is the general cultural text of shared knowledge: as such, it is subject to correction and modification, but essentially it serves as a kind of nature (thus approaching first level *vraisemblance*). This is what Barthes would call *doxa*, though he seems to conflate levels one and two

1. 'Naturalisation' and '*vraisemblablisation*' are not strictly synonymous. According to Culler, the former emphasizes the incorporation of the strange and deviant (in this case, the literary text) within a discursive order, the latter makes explicit the importance of *cultural* models of the *vraisemblable* as sources of meaning (see Culler 1975, 140).

in practice. Level (3) involves what Culler calls the ‘specifically literary intelligibility’ constituted by the texts or conventions of a particular genre or sub-genre (for instance the detective novel). Third-order *vraisemblance* governs the internal norms of the text: for instance, although the comparison is anachronistic, we expect Jane Austen’s heroines to behave in a particular way, and such behaviour would look out of place in a Jackie Collins’ novel.² Level (4) is what Culler terms the ‘natural attitude to the artificial’, where a text explicitly cites and exposes the third, literary kind of *vraisemblance* in order to reinforce its own authority. Finally, level (5) is the complex *vraisemblance* of specific intertextualities, where one work takes another as its point of departure (Part Four of *Les Géorgiques*, for instance).

In *Si te dicen*, according to Culler’s interpretative framework, references to the power of the narrator or author, and to the act of narration hover on the brink of a move away from mimesis. They emphasize that the true order of the narrative is not that of the conventions of a genre, but that of the narrative act itself. This means that the text is naturalized not at the level of literary conventions, but at levels one and two, those of the text of the real, and of naturalized cultural stereotypes, which specify the possibilities of action in the text. However, ultimately, levels one and two are subsumed into a higher level of intelligibility:

The text finds its coherence by being interpreted as a narrator’s exercise of language and production of meaning. To naturalize it at this level is to read it as a statement about the writing of novels, a critique of mimetic fiction, an illustration of the production of the world by language. (1975, 149-50)

Si te dicen makes the reader aware of the text’s ‘fictionality’ by forcing her to move between different levels of *vraisemblance*. The episodes concerning the *maquis* are an example of primarily third level *vraisemblance*, and those passages where narration, its processes, and the various generic conventions it involves are mentioned, either implicitly or explicitly, are examples of fourth order *vraisemblance*.³ As mentioned in Chapter 2, Labanyi’s reading of the novel is

2. Prendergast’s account of *vraisemblance* brings into question the notion of ‘internal’ textual norms: *vraisemblance* cannot solely be a generic issue, since in practice it is difficult to distinguish where generic norms or codes stop and social and cultural ones begin (for instance in relation to norms of ‘feminine’ behaviour).

3. Examples of the latter include when Sarnita presents his listeners with two different possible narratives on prostitution, and the frequent allusions to the conventions of detective novels.

particularly acute in exploring two possible ways of reading the novel - one realist, one anti-realist. On the one hand, she relates the proliferation of fictions in the novel to the political repression and censorship of the forties, as mimicking – but self-consciously, thus subversively - in their continual ‘deferral of truth’ the mythical nature of Nationalist (see 1989, 141-46, especially 143).

This echoes Marsé’s own emphasis on the novel’s blend of fictional *and* referential elements as representative of a contestatory ‘memoria popular de los acontecimientos’ (Sinnigen 1979, 111; see also 116-17). In the Samaniego interview, Marsé comments:

La materia del libro es indagar una y otra vez en una realidad que se resiste a ser ofrecida de una forma veraz. En algún pasaje del libro digo que esas ‘aventis’ que cuentan los niños - porque todo surge, desde el punto de vista narrativo, de una pequeña fábula [la búsqueda de Aurora/Ramona] que, yo diría es la que contamina todo el libro - son [...] una mezcla de películas que han visto, TEBEOS que han leído, novelas de aventuras y, también, historias que han oído en casa a sus padres [...] En esa época, las historias eran de escondidos, encarcelados, fusilados, exiliados, etc. Luego, al producirse esa mezcla de fantasía y realidad, el material avanza [...], para imponer su versión frente a [...] la versión franquista. Según esa versión, vivíamos en el mejor de los paraísos y no pasaba nada de nada. Y como eso era falso, frente a esa versión oficial surgía la otra que era un maremagnum de contradicciones, rumores, hechos verídicos, fantasías etc. [...] En aquella época todo era tan enrevesado que se hacía necesario ese contrapunto, esa falsa versión. ¿Visión verdadera? No se sabe. (1993, 384-85)

Thus Labanyi reads the text as referring, at least in part, to a ‘real’ society in which ‘history’ has been replaced by ‘representation’, just as ‘the original source which explains the story of Aurora and Marcos is the Civil War, the truth about which will never be known’ (1989, 163). It is not clear whether the latter statement refers only to the suppression of the truth about the recent conflict in Nationalist Spain or is intended to be an absolute statement about the status of historical knowledge of the Civil War. This ambiguity is interesting given the wider question of whether the referential status of historical discourse *per se* is questioned in the text. However, here, it seems that it is because of the particular nature of the referent, ‘Franco’s Spain’, that the referential relation of the text is held up for scrutiny.

On the other hand, Labanyi reads the constant allusions to different versions of the same events, to different fictional forms and to the act of narration as a

statement about the nature of mimetic fiction:

The impossibility of recovering the original event behind the mythifications, except by means of further mythification, is however not a problem exclusive to Spain in the 1940's but one inherent in all fiction that claims to give a faithful portrait of an original reality [...]. At the same time the novel shows an understanding of the fact that the desire to get back to an original source is a basic factor in the generation of fiction. (1989, 163)

The 'blurring' of fact and fiction and the shifts in narrative time displace cause and effect in the novel: it is impossible to tell which original event generates a performance or version - or even whether an original exists (as with the Arsène Lupin film discussed in Chapter 2).⁴ According to Labanyi, the novel shows a movement from 'an initial balance between anticipation and memory to an ever greater reliance on memory' (1989, 170). It begins by juxtaposing the boys' 'forward-looking mythifications' with the maquis's 'regressive mythifications' to, at the end of the novel, the abandonment of the *aventis* by the boys. This represents the defeat of their imaginative ability to fantasize an alternative reality and so escape their degraded and degrading context (1989, 171). However, Labanyi's main point is that the *aventis* are just as 'corrupt' as any of the representations in the novel, and for meta-fictional reasons:

All versions are necessarily corrupt in that they supplant an original. But fantasy and memory represent different forms of corruption. Fantasy, in its attempt to transform the world, makes no claim to fidelity. Memory claims to be faithful to an original but in practice betrays it. (1989, 172)

A general argument is being made here, not just in relation to the characters' memories of the Franco period in this particular novel. 'Memory' here appears to denote mimetic fictional accounts and/or historical accounts *per se*. The term is opposed to 'fantasy', which is used interchangeably with the term 'fiction' and presumably denotes anti-mimetic accounts like the *aventis* (172-73). However, if, as according to the Derridian view referred to in the Introduction, there is no original event or referent to be corrupted but only a chain of representations, it is difficult to see how the notion of 'corruption' applies. It is not clear whether Labanyi's argument

4. Labanyi cites Chapter 4 of *Si te dicen* as the supreme example of this 'complex blend of

also holds to the view that *any* referential relation between language and the world 'in any discursive context' is illusory (Prendergast 1986, 66). If it does, then the problem with this relativist notion is that there is no 'meta-position' the reader can take which would allow her to decide that the fantasy or anti-mimetic 'version' of the past is more authentic, less (or differently?) 'corrupt', than the mimetic version.⁵

The effect of 'fiction' upon the reader is compared by Labanyi to a seduction process (1989, 173). Here, Labanyi makes clear that she is referring to *mimetic* fiction: '[i]n pornography - as indeed in realist fiction in general - the reader is given the illusion that he is in command inasmuch as the sequences acted out on the printed page appear to be presented for his sole attention' (1989, 175).⁶ Labanyi's argument makes a general analogy between realist representation and two specific generic forms: pornography and the thriller. She also sees the conventions of pornographic representation as being particularly illuminating in this case because of the novel's central theme of 'sexual degradation', - related to, but not totally exhausting, its many allusions to dressing up and undressing (in particular, Java and Aurora/Ramona's performances for Conrado) - and because of its formal structure. The fact that so many of the *aventis* are pornographic emphasizes that fiction is 'by definition a peep show, in which the "real thing" is replaced by a simulation or performance' (1989 173). The revelation of the 'real thing' - the referent or original event - is continually deferred in the novel. This provides the dynamic of the narrative, as in the hermeneutic 'striptease' performed by both pornographic and thriller genres, which 'titillate the reader with the promise of a revelation which is delayed till the last and which, when it comes, provides only vicarious pleasure' (1989, 174). Indeed, as a narrator, Sarnita knows this and manipulates his listeners accordingly.

Labanyi then argues that *Si te dicen* actually deconstructs or demythifies the power relations underpinning pornography - and, by implication, 'realist fiction' - by

memory and fantasy' (1989, 169).

5. See Prendergast's critique of the epistemological and ethical relativism inherent in Lyotard's notion of the *différend* (1986, pp. 240-49).

6. The notion of the reader occupying a 'commanding' position in relation to the realist text, conceived of as the visual domination of a geometrical space, has echoes of the semiological critique of realism. Prendergast questions this notion of the relationship between reader and text, firstly, because to identify the hypostasised subject of mimesis with the authoritative narrator involves a circular argument about how narrative authority is generated. Secondly, the 'subject' of mimesis is in fact not transcendental but intersubjective, the product of historically, and culturally, determined 'interpretative schemas' existing between reader and writer (see 1986, pp. 27-31).

self-consciously alluding to its content and structures. Firstly, it depicts the pornographic scenes from the viewpoint of the victim, turning the tables on the fictional voyeur (Conrado), who becomes the object of the active performer (Java/Aurora): 'power thus passes into the hands of the dispossessed' (1989 175). According to Labanyi, describing the sexual performances from the viewpoint of the victim also affects the real reader, who is 'seduced', like the fictional voyeur, by being placed in a 'direct relationship with the performance being acted out'. Once the reader has been 'seduced' into imaginative identification, she is taken 'backstage' and shown 'the emotion of the performers' (1989, 176). On the one hand, then, there is an empathy with the narrative viewpoint of the victim - the kind of reader recognition produced by a mimetic text. On the other, the novel unmask the workings of the narrative with the result that: 'the reader is made [to] reflect on the artificial nature of the power relations that create the pornographic scenario' (1989, 176).⁷

Labanyi's use of the term 'seduction' to describe the effect of the text on the reader, her notion of the reader as (illusorily) controlling the space of the text, and her description of mimetic writing as a relation between an 'original' and a 'copy' are all aspects of a meta-fictional commentary on the functioning and effects of mimetic fiction. On this reading, narrative subversion in *Si te dicen* would therefore be 'a critique of mimetic fiction, an illustration of the production of the world by language' (Culler 1975, 149-50).

However, firstly, Labanyi's characterization of the depiction of the pornographic scenes as empowering the victims is questionable. It is still ultimately the nationalist authority figures, such as Conrado (and, later, the Jeweller) who determine what acts will constitute Java's performance, and who control the economic relations which determine the transaction. In fact, Labanyi's reading runs counter to the novel's portrayal of the corruption of both Java and Carmen/Menchu. Their choices, in performing roles which service the Francoist elite, are represented not as empowering but as alienating: they do not disturb but bolster the rigid social hierarchy of postwar society. For example, the fate of Menchu, the 'fulana de lujo', is described with pathos: 'Su imagen prisionera en una cárcel de espejos repetidos,

7. This begs the question, asked in relation to Barthes's 'reality effect' in the Introduction (see pp. 11-13 above), what kind of reader is likely to fall prey to such a 'seduction' in the first place?

sin escapatoria posible, mordiéndose la cola: sintiendo que todo estaba decidido desde siempre' (*Si te dicen*, p. 247). Similarly, even Sarnita, the spinner of *aventis*, while apparently using fiction to manipulate his (sometimes powerful) listeners, can be seen as trapped in a fantasy-world of his own making, like the *maquis* who refuse to face up to the reality of the post-war world. The fact that it is difficult to separate the stories of the child Sarnita from those of the adult Nito suggests the latter is imprisoned by the past, condemned to relive his memories perpetually (see, for instance, *Si te dicen*, p. 356).

However, the final point in Labanyi's argument regarding the potential political thrust of defamiliarisation in the text is powerful. As she comments: 'Fiction is shown to be a form of myth-making, but it can be used to unmask the political myths that encourage us to accept as natural power relations that are man-made and the result of specific historical circumstances: in this case, the Civil War' (1989, 177). *Si te dicen* reveals a society where 'the falsification of human relations has turned everything into a representation'. This suggests the production of fictions in the novel functions thematically, mirroring formally the fundamentally corrosive nature of Francoist society precisely because it 'reproduces the corruption process' (ibid). Thus the 'anti-mimetic' techniques used in *Si te dicen* ultimately are used to mimetic and pragmatic effect: to portray through a formal homology a society in which, since there is no reliable narrative authority, or informed consensus, the process of semiosis is unstoppable. The text draws attention to its own status as a fictional text, but for a specific demythifying purpose, and with reference to a particular historical moment.

In fact, *Si te dicen* can be read as a kind of a kind of 'limit' text for Marsé, a text which hovers on the limit of mimesis.⁸ Its proliferation of plots and concern with plotting, for instance, can be read as a meta-fictional comment about the nature of writing itself, along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari's argument in *Mille Plateaux* about the 'paranoid', repressive structure or a 'territorialisation' of the world inherent in any semiotic system. This structure is particularly associated by them with a stable system of mimetic representation (see Prendergast 1986, 225-27; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 142-44). Similarly, the novel's use of the structure of the detective

8. In *S/Z*, Barthes is interested in Balzac's *Sarrasine* because it represents the destabilisation of the mimetic economy, pushing the concerns and form of the text as far as they will go without crossing the 'limit' of mimesis.

story can be read meta-fictionally, as in Labanyi's reading, where the (fruitless) search for Aurora/Ramona, which forms the main plot device, involves a subversion of the conventions of the traditional detective story.

Indeed, Prendergast shows how the figure of the detective has often been regarded by critics as the urban equivalent of the older figure of the hunter: his example is Carlo Ginzburg, in his article 'Signes, Pistes, Traces' (see Ginzburg 1980, p. 14). On Ginzburg's reading, the development of the detective novel in the first half of the nineteenth century articulates 'an abiding preoccupation with systems of identification and control' (Prendergast 1986, 223; Ginzburg 1980, 23). More generally, according to Prendergast, the recognitive order of mimesis has been seen as a system for 'keeping tabs on identities' (1986, 221). Thus the proliferation of doubles in *Si te dicen*, and the failed attempt to track down Aurora and to 'fix' her identity (to discover her 'true' story), could be interpreted as critiquing the way realist fiction, with its clearly delineated narrative identities, acts as a 'regulative symbolic system for keeping a check on our collective *carte d'identité*' (Prendergast 1986, 217). The text's use of motifs and structures from the detective novel is such that the novel's 'ending' does not bring result in the narrative resolution or 'last word' often associated with the figure of the detective 'laying down the semiotic and narrative law' (Prendergast 1986, 224). Although the final meeting between Palau and Lage offers some resolution (they recount the fate of Jaime), the truth status of their account is uncertain, and the novel's hermeneutic enigmas remain. For instance, the question of the fate of Aurora/Ramona and Marcos is left hanging despite (or because of) Sarnita's *aventi*.

However, to read Marsé's text as a principally meta-fictional novel is to ignore its specific narrative context. It is perfectly possible to read the boys' obsession with plots and plotting (in both senses of the word) mimetically, as a representation of the generalised atmosphere of paranoia in early nationalist Spain. Or as a reference to the regime's desire to assert a rigid system political control on the population. Rather than enacting, through the construction of plural, often conflicting versions of events, a semiological resistance to what Barthes termed the essential 'fascism' of language or symbolic structures, what the text both symbolizes and enacts resistance to is the authoritarian narrative of a particular fascist regime.

Similarly, the motif of the frustrated and frustrating search for Aurora might

allude to the actual institutional control and persecution of individuals, both physical and psychological, which occurred during the construction of the Francoist state. In this sense, by blurring identities, the text enacts a discursive resistance to the Francoist project of inserting individuals into a hierarchical social order with strictly-policed boundaries. In addition, the centrality of the *aventi* can be viewed not simply thematically as a reflection of the generalized corruption of the regime, but via Prendergast's account of mimetic plotting as representing a fundamental and essential form of social knowledge or cognitive mastery. Telling *aventis* enables the boys to forge a group identity by 'configuring' a narrative through which to recognize and locate themselves in their world - just as, moving from the micro to the macro, the text, narrated by multiple voices, attempts to (re)construct an oblique form of popular testament to the period. As Labanyi's reading also shows, the novel constructs a heterogeneous collective narrative, imaginatively 'filling in the gaps' or 'making sense' of a grassroots experience which was either mythified or rendered invisible by a homogeneizing Francoist discourse.

The novel's imitation of the oral narrative form can also be understood in this context. It has also been interpreted meta-fictionally: the novel plays oral and literary conventions off against one another in order to 'undermine the realist suspension of belief, making the reader critically aware of the fictional nature of what he is reading' (Labanyi 1989, 152). However, it can also be read referentially as an allusion to the stranglehold of the censor on most forms of cultural production, and the presence of the mediations of official ideology in all written and visual media.

Against Literary Theory

Where does Marsé himself stand on the matter of the 'anti-mimetic' effect of *Si te dicen*, in particular, and the question of literary realism in general? What reasons does he give for the changes made to the original edition of *Si te dicen* and the decision to publish a new '*versión corregida y definitiva*' of the novel?

Marsé's views on the former question appear superficially simple, but on analysis express a more complex position, one that can be fruitfully illuminated by reference to Prendergast's discussion of mimesis. Marsé explicitly situates himself within 'the realist tradition, very generally speaking' (Gazarian-Gautier 1991, 169).

On numerous occasions he refers to the writers that have most influenced him. Apart from the 'literatura de quiosco' he read before cheap paperback editions of the classics became available (Labanyi 1989, 147), he cites French nineteenth century realist writers like Stendhal, Flaubert, Balzac, plus Baroja and Dickens (see for example Amell, 11-12; Gazarian-Gautier, 167; Samaniego, 382; Sinnigen, 118).

However, he also takes the view that narrative realism is inseparable from the use of 'folletinesco' elements or 'telling a good story' (Gazarian-Gautier 1991, 169.) and thus from keeping the reader entertained (ibid; see also Amell 1984, 8-12). Marsé's concept of realism is opposed to 'intellectual novels, novels of ideas' (ibid), which seems to denote novels written to illustrate abstract, literary-theoretical concepts. For Marsé, theories of literature or a conscious preoccupation with questions of narrative form are a pernicious influence because they weaken the *vraisemblance* of the novel: 'Los personajes tienen que levantarse; tienen que tener vida propia; y un exceso de carga teórica mata esta condición' (Samaniego 1990, 378; Amell 1984, 12-13).⁹

Similar views are also expressed by Marsé in relation to the formal complexity of *Si te dicen*, which he describes as stemming not from any abstract narrative principle, but from the thematic concerns and 'panoramic scope' of the novel. For this reason, he does not see the novel as being more experimental than his other work:

9. In *La muchacha* there is an echo of this view when Forest explicitly rejects what he calls 'basuras teorizantes y panfletarias de vanguardistas y doctrinarios' (171). In addition, Mariana's criticisms of her uncle's style parody Goytisolo's attempts to 'destroy language' through, for instance, deliberately breaking syntactic conventions, as in *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (see *La muchacha*, p. 170; Sherzer, p. 101; Amell, pp. 12-13). However, such a literal reading of Forest's comment is complicated by the fact that it is spoken by him, and his own overblown style is also critiqued in the novel.

No me planteo cuestiones de orden teórico a priori, ni ensayo estrategias narrativas [...] Es la propia estructura de la novela la que me exige; o bien, las condiciones estructurales propias que exige determinado tema, me proporcionan la solución. En *Si te dicen* concretamente, yo me di cuenta enseguida de que la complejidad estructural de la novela sería enorme. ¿Por qué? Pues porque tenía muchas historias que contar a la vez, y quería encontrar la forma de trenzarlas [...] En consecuencia lo que quiero decir es que el propio tema me impuso o me obligó [...] a una complejidad estructural que yo he estado siempre muy lejos de buscar [...] [D]e ningún modo, una vez terminada una novela, se me ocurre decir [...] que he descubierto una forma estructural, una teoría narrativa que me solucionara los problemas. (Samaniego 1993, 377; see also Sinnigen 1979, 116-17)

On the other hand, he also claims that ‘the problems of the novel begin and end with language’ (Gazarian-Gautier, 168). This concern with form can be seen in the way he emphasizes the importance of intertextuality. This is both in general terms, as when he comments that he began writing by imitating not ‘life’ but the style of other writers (Gazarian-Gautier, 166), or when he cites particular literary models for particular texts (Culler’s fifth type of *vraisemblance*). Laín Entralgo’s *Descargo de conciencia* served as the inspiration for *La muchacha* and Julien Sorel in *Le Rouge et le noir* inspired the character of Manolo in *Últimas tardes* (Samaniego, 380-81). His work has also been described as ‘intra-textual’ (a term Sherzer takes from Todorov), a concept discussed in Chapter Two in relation to characterisation. Finally, in an interview in *Destino*, Marsé describes *La muchacha* as ‘un homenaje a la literatura de ficción en su lucha, bastante desigual hoy en día, contra la literatura testimonial’, making an analogy between the figure of the Francoist historian who attempts to rewrite or reinvent the past and the novelist who invents ‘una ficción’ (see Sherzer 1982, 182; 1985, 31-32).

What this shows is that Marsé does not adopt a ‘naive’ realist stance in which language is regarded as a ‘mirror’ or ‘window’ which statically and passively ‘reflects’ a pre-given reality. The ocular metaphor of ‘the transparency of the linguistic sign’, as in Sartre’s image of prose as a pane of glass or ‘vitre’ reflecting the world, is identified by Prendergast as the cornerstone of one tradition of viewing the relation of mimetic language to the world (1986, 61). However, this does not seem to be Marsé’s view of realism. In fact, as his analogy between the novelist and the Francoist historian shows, Marsé emphasises the ability of language not simply to refer to a pre-existing reality but also to question, modify, even distort or *de-*

familiarize that reality. This is explicit in his assertion that: '[Forest] se parecía mucho a la personalidad del novelista y a la naturaleza del oficio de escribir una novela, es decir, rectificar continuamente la realidad' (in Sherzer 1985, 31; see also Sinnigen 1979, 119). On several occasions he claims the *Quijote* is the first novel, for the reason that all novels are concerned with 'un cuestionamiento constante de qué es la realidad' (Sinnigen 1979, 116).

Thus Marsé cannot be seen as falling either into the 'camp' of the 'epistemologically naive' realist (Prendergast 1986, 27); nor into what might be seen as the poststructuralist 'camp' in which signs refer to other signs in an 'unlimited semiosis' (1986, 67). While Marsé is aware of the kind of anti-realist narrative techniques practised by the *nouveaux romanciers*, he seems to adopt a pragmatic approach to such novelistic theories:

Resulta entonces que hay un tipo de novela que se puede considerar anticuada, pasada. En todo caso esto sería el concepto de la novela decimonónica, de la cual Balzac es el ejemplo máximo. El era el dios absoluto de personajes y situaciones [...] Es decir que el autor entraba y salía de la casa como Pedro por su casa. Este es un concepto que está en desuso [...] Pero luego aparece la otra vertiente, cuya novela se destaca por el objetalismo francés que tuvo sus máximos exponentes en Robbe-Grillet [sic] y Nathalie Sarraute, autores en los que el narrador se esconde de tal manera que no aparece por ninguna parte [...] Se trata de dos conceptos de la novela. Pero yo no creo ni he creído nunca en etiquetas [...] Es decir, a mí lo que me interesa es manejar lo que más me interesa de ambos conceptos. (Samaniego 1993, 382-83)

In fact one can speculatively relate his view of realism to that outlined by Ricœur, that is, as grounded in a relation not of passive imitation but of 'productive reference'.¹⁰ *Si te dicen* can thus be seen as perhaps Marsé's most interesting text,

10. Mimesis for Ricœur involves not passively reproducing the forms of symbolization or 'pre-understanding' shared by writer and reader but re-working these shared meanings into new combinations in a tri-partite process. Firstly, 'prefiguration', which Prendergast defines as the 'repertory of social competences' or the 'everyday practical knowledge' shared by the writer and reader. The second stage is 'configuration' where the writer moves from prefiguration to the world of literary fiction (for instance by means of plotting). Literary configuration is not an inert copy of the pre-figured world but a 'dynamic redescription' of experience, and as such its relation to the world is one of 'productive reference'. This means it can also actively contest the forms of the prefigured world. The third stage is 'Transfiguration', where the act of reading accompanies the configuration of the narrative and actualizes its capacity for being followed. According to Prendergast, Ricœur admits that usually this is a conservative force, acting as a constraint upon configuration in its return to pre-figuration (see Prendergast 1986, 233-37; Ricœur 1981, 15-32). Nevertheless, while Ricœur's account allows for subversion of the pre-given paradigms, its very location in historically produced pre-understanding is also what sets constraints on such subversive

but also as something of an anomaly. As stated in Chapter 2, most of Marsé's novels do not involve the same radical questioning of the referential relation of the text to the world. Furthermore, Marsé's revision of the novel appears to work against interpreting the text as essentially anti-mimetic.¹¹

The Revised edition of *Si te dicen que caí*

This next section will consider briefly the changes made to the 1989 revised edition of *Si te dicen*. It argues that, while Marsé claims that the changes do not radically alter the reader's relation to the text, in fact, the 'revision' constitutes the production of a new text. Moreover, after analysing the changes made, it argues that Marsé's rewriting attempts to make his original text conform more closely to a model of textual production which derives its rationale explicitly from a mimetic notion of narrative clarity (and opacity).¹²

All the changes affect the kind of blurring of narrative focalization and time, and of referential and fictional discourse which are so essential to the impact of the original text.¹³ For this reason, it seems unhelpful to categorize those changes effected on the level of what might be termed the text's 'content' (for example, the addition or omission of passages) as substantial, and those which occur on the 'formal' level (for example, typographical changes) as less substantial. Formal changes such as subtle changes in register can have significant repercussions on, and implications for, the semantic level of the text as a whole. For the purposes of this analysis, the revisions made have been divided into the following categories:

(1) **Typographical changes.** Apart from punctuation, these include changes in paragraphing and chapter organisation. Another sub-category is grammatical changes,

play with the paradigms. Narrative deviations work in terms of 'rule-governed deformations', thus: 'Unmaking has its context and also its limit' (1986, 235-37).

11. Of course, there is no reason why the author's account of his intentions should have more purchase on the text than any other reading. In *S/Z*, Barthes argues against the notions of the *auteur-dieu* and *critique-prêtre*, where the *lisible* text is the textual *expression* of an author's ideas which the critic must treat like the sacred texts of holy scripture. On this reading, texts are not 'plural' but closed: they involve a 'maîtrise du sens' which imposes a particular meaning or set of meanings on the reader. Barthes's description of the way meaning is *directed* by the author of the *lisible* text highlights the double meaning of *sens* as both 'meaning' and 'direction' (1970, 180).

12. Narrative 'penumbra' and 'claridad' (Marsé in *Si te dicen*, 1989, p. 6).

13. The original and revised editions of the text will be referred to as *SDC1* and *SDC2* respectively. For *SDC1*, references are to the 1985 Cátedra edition.

that is, where it appears that the structure in the original has been corrected or ‘tidied up’ according to stylistic conventions. Cases where it appears obvious typographical errors have been corrected have been omitted.

(2) **Changes in narrative time.** These include changes in the narrative tenses of particular passages and the addition of, or increased emphasis on, time markers (that is, conjunctions or adverbial phrases which relate the passage in question to a particular time period within the narrative).

(3) **Changes in narrative voice and focalization.** These refer to a process of tying down the text to particular narrators in those passages where, in the original, the source-narrator is ambiguous. The obvious effect is that the reader’s attention is focused less on questions of narrative reliability and authority, because the origin of what is being related is less problematic. It also lessens the sense of the narrative being constructed out of shifting voices.

(4) **Clarification of meaning.** This is a somewhat catch-all category bringing together the various ways that narrative actions, and notations referring to character and atmosphere, are elaborated upon in the revised edition to make them less ambiguous. This extends from the addition of passages, to changes in register or vocabulary affecting the tone of the text. One of the most consistent changes made is the addition of descriptive detail. The primary function of this extra detail appears to be either to (i) stabilize the identity of the characters, and/or (ii) denote atmosphere more clearly.

All the above changes strengthen the ‘realistic motivation’ of the text. However, before looking at some concrete examples, the concept of ‘realistic motivation’ must be defined. According to Culler’s scheme in *Structuralist Poetics*, mentioned above, the revised edition would represent a shift away from third and fourth level *vraisemblance* towards second order *vraisemblance*. That is, the revision strengthens the referential relation of the text bringing it closer to the modern version of *écriture classique*, in which the text’s referential foundation is presupposed to be clear and unambiguous.¹⁴ As Culler puts it:

14. Roughly speaking, second-order *vraisemblance* is dominant when a text calls on cultural ‘stereotypes’ or, in Prendergast’s more positive reading, the forms of ‘practical knowledge’ which involve reference to ‘publicly shared semantic categories’. The use of demonstratives followed by relative clauses is the classic example of this (‘she was one of those women who’; ‘on one of those

Citing this general social discourse is a way of grounding a work in reality, of establishing a relationship between words and world which serves as a guarantee of intelligibility; but more important are the interpretive operations which it permits. When a character in a novel performs an action, the reader can give it a meaning by drawing upon this fund of human knowledge which establishes connections between action and motive, behaviour and personality. (1975, p. 143)

Whereas in the original text the reader is not allowed to remain for long on the third level of *vraisemblance* - that is, on the level of the conventions of literary realism - in the revised edition this form of *vraisemblance* is reinforced by drawing sharper boundaries between levels three and four. In effect, the original text makes the reader read more 'self-consciously'.¹⁵ In order to illustrate the above points, since there are revisions on almost every page of *SDC2*, for the sake of concision, one important passage will be examined. This passage, as it appears in both versions of the text, is reproduced in Appendix One.¹⁶

Firstly, there is a more conventional use of punctuation in *SDC2*. Paragraph breaks are far more frequent in the revised text, and the usual effect is to break the flow of the narrative and to make the switches between different narrators, time periods, and even tenses, clearer. Secondly, there are changes in narrative focalization including reinforced references to the *sujet de l'énoncé*: for instance, by inserting subject pronouns ('él' or 'ella'), or names, where previously only the verb was given. In this passage, there are three added repetitions of the name 'Java' and two references to 'Hermana', plus an expansion of the dialogue between the two speakers, which in the original is minimal. There are also responses by Sor Paulina to what in the original text are embedded questions - questions to which the implied listener does not respond (for instance, lines 11-12 in *SDC2*).

Again, the overall effect is to attribute the actions, dialogue and descriptions to a particular focalizer: it also helps to distinguish different speakers. In other words, the revised edition removes a level of ambiguity as to both the *sujet de l'énoncé* and the *sujet de l'énonciation*. According to Culler, one way in which the process of

days when').

15. According to Barthes' typology of texts, we might say that *SDC1* is a scriptible text and *SDC2* more lisible (see Barthes 1970, 10-14). However, as Prendergast objects, Barthes's typology is fetishistic and his periodisation untenable (1986, 15-16)

16. Italics in *SDC2* indicate revisions. For a more detailed discussion of changes, see my article 'The Rewriting of Marsé's *Si te dicen que caí*' in *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, LXXVI (1999).

naturalization that occurs in reading takes place is through the use of 'narrative *personae*'. We read the text as the utterance of a particular narrator, and we read the various actions and elements within the narrative by referring them to 'a general economy of human actions' (1975, 147). One reason reading the original text is unsettling is precisely because of the difficulty of establishing precise narrative focalizers: we cannot read the text solely in terms of subjective realism, and construct a model of a coherent personality for the narrator - or indeed determine the narrative stance with any certainty. In the above passage, the effect of the changes is to render absolutely transparent both: (a) what is being described, that is, the way the *aventis* mix fact and fiction, and Java's skill as a storyteller and; (b) who is speaking and who is listening to this description (the narrator is the adult Sarnita).

Homogenizing narrative focalization has a similar effect. In the original, the focalizer shifts from internal to external, between the adult Nito ('nosotros') and the comments of a meta-narrator ('ellos'). In the revised text, the narrative focalizer is definitely Nito, as can be seen in the shift from 'Arruinada *su* capacidad de asombro' (line 35 of *SDC1*) to 'Arruinada *nuestra* capacidad' (*SDC2*, line 59). This is emphasised by the addition of the phrase 'pensó Nito' and is consistent with the rest of the revised text, where reporting verbs are added to passages of dialogue and descriptions. Conversational tags are also more frequent, thereby revealing to the reader - or reminding her - of the presence and identities of narrator and listener (here, for instance, we have the explicit question '¿Hermana, se acuerda?').

The next set of changes involves the addition of detail, one of the most significant and consistent features of the revision. Firstly, detail is used as a realist notation, as an index of character or atmosphere, again removing ambiguity from the narrative. In this passage, we are told the timbre of the boy Nito's voice, effectively an index of character: this suggests, for instance, his love of, and skill at, storytelling, but also that he is a somewhat pathetic, down-trodden figure. The passage also gives more notations of atmosphere - one example being the additions to the description of the boys listening to Java's incredible stories. This could also partly explain the added reference to Fu-Manchu films, which not only serves as a reference to the cultural world of Nito's childhood, and as an index of character, suggesting he is a fantasist, but also serves to flesh out his relationship with Sor Paulina.¹⁷

17. In my 1999 article I argued that, for instance, we could view the addition of Sor Paulina's

Finally, one of most significant changes in this passage is the addition of a description of the *aventis* and their relation to the phantasmagorical post-war world. The effect is, firstly, to give a more realistically-motivated description of the political repression that occurred after the war, and the atmosphere of generalized paranoia it generated. Secondly, the description breaks the flow of Nito's reflections and makes the question of the *aventis*'s relation to the referential discourse in the novel less problematic.

SDC2 suggests that, because postwar reality resembles a nightmare, and because the generalized uncertainty and insecurity has rendered previous notions of what is possible and what is probable - in other words, what is *vraisemblable* - inoperative, this destabilizes the boundaries of what is considered real and what fantastical. As such, it beggars the power of the imagination to represent this new reality. Only a narrative which is equally phantasmagorical is able to convey the mood of the times, presumably because it is not restricted by now outmoded rules of *vraisemblance*: it can deal with sequences of seemingly arbitrary, unpredictable events, and with the displacement of normal inferential structures. However, this raises the question of whether the distinction between 'reality' as represented by a rational, realist discourse and previously associated with the adult world, and 'fiction', that is, the fantastical narratives of the *aventis* and the imaginative world of childhood which the boys inhabit, is really subverted. In fact, the passage in *SDC2* does not represent a fundamental move away from a representational aesthetic *per se*, towards one of defamiliarization, but rather a revised notion of mimesis, in tune with the new postwar reality.

Moreover, it suggests that, although the fantastical form - if not the content - of the boys' *aventis* reflects the reality of the times, this narrative and these times are also aberrations from an underlying norm of social reality and, in turn, an underlying and unchanging mimetic code. There is a slight but significant semantic shift from the original text. The latter suggests that it is precisely because the *aventis* did not make sense in conventional or logical terms - that is, on the basis of inferential logic

gesture ('quitándole de las manos un frasco sin etiqueta') as a non-functional detail. However, this gesture can also be seen as clarifying the location and time reference of the story, or as an indicator of psychology. Again, it is only possible to determine what are 'insignificant' or non-functional details within a concrete narrative context (as Barthes himself acknowledges). More radically, it can be argued that this undermines the whole notion of the 'reality effect', as discussed in the Introduction.

- that they were believable, or enjoyable: ‘Las mejores eran aquellas que no tenían ni pies ni cabeza, aquellas en las que *no había que esforzarse para que resultaran creíbles*: nada por entonces tenía sentido.’ (SDC1, 81). This implies that reality and *aventi* are *both* radically altered, both undergoing adjustment to the production of different forms of what Ricœur would call the ‘pre-understanding’ between reader and writer of a text (Prendergast 1986, 78 & 233-36). Hence a different kind of *vraisemblance* is required. In the revised edition, an apparently minor change makes it clear that there are, still, underlying norms or ‘semantic categories’ from which the *aventi* departs. It is despite this, and only because post-war reality also departs from this norm, that the *aventis* are credible: ‘Las mejores eran aquellas que no tenían ni pies ni cabeza *pero que, a pesar de ello, resultaban creíbles*: nada por aquel entonces tenía sentido, Hermana, ¿se acuerda [etc.]?’ (SDC2, p. 28).

Finally, there is an increased use of italicisation in the revised text. Italicising the references in the text to films, comics, books or songs is another typographical convention the revised edition observes where the original does not. Italics are also used for Catalan words (for example, *trinxas/es*) and for colloquial terms (for example, *Flecha*). In the original text, quotation marks are removed from references to fictional works and unattributed lines from other texts, and woven into the fabric of the narrative, especially into the *aventis*. This can be read as an attempt to reproduce in written form the style and patterns of these oral narratives (see Labanyi 1989, 150-52). In the revised edition, distinguishing typographically such intertextual allusions reminds the reader that, in fact, the text is a literary construct, one in which a different set of conventions operates.

However, citing other texts is not restricted to those episodes of the novel which are identifiably *aventis* and such references signify not just the intertextuality of the narrative. The embedded use of these structures and motifs implies they are inseparable from, and inform, any process of narrativisation, that is, they are inseparable from how the boys represent and make intelligible events in their everyday lives. This is the kind of circular process where books (or, here, films and comics) influence expectations and behaviour, informing the cultural and social code of *vraisemblance*, which then feeds back into cultural products, in such a way as to make it impossible to determine which came first. As discussed in Chapter Two, the narrative draws attention to the range of images which can be drawn upon from

popular fictional forms in the boys' representation of the prostitute (from 'fulana de lujo' to the 'más tirada' streetwalker) or the *maquis* (from heroic freedom-fighter to opportunistic hoodlum).

On a meta-narrative level, this constitutes a 'strong' notion of intertextuality. In SDC1, there seem to be no fixed limits between this text and other fictional texts - the novel appears more as a discursive space in which many codes, literary and socio-cultural, intersect. The all-pervasiveness of fictional elements and representational processes suggests the text knowingly refers to a reality that is always already encoded, with the two as what Prendergast calls 'homologous systems of signification' (1986, 68). The effect of italicising intertextual references in the revised edition is to cordon them off. Paradoxically, although the use of italics highlights the fact that the narrative is a literary construct, it effectively draws a line around it, distinguishing those elements which are 'proper' to it from those which are 'foreign'. Thus it moves away from a strong notion of intertextuality to a weaker notion: we are back to the third level of *vraisemblance*, where such quotes become primarily realist notations of the socio-cultural world of the civil war and post-war.

Marsé's own explanation of why the novel needed revision is given in the *Nota a la nueva edición*. This shows that he regards the decision to revise the text as inseparable from the conditions of its genesis. However, before considering the latter, it should be noted that these prefatory pages in fact constitute a *retrospective* reading of the text, and there is no reason why this reading should have more authority than any other interpretation.¹⁸ Marsé's preface appears to impute a stable identity to the text. It might be thought that what logically follows from this is that any changes to the text alter or violate its 'true' identity. However, such an idea of textual identity ultimately, and paradoxically, renders any process of revision unproblematic, since any changes leave the text's 'essence' untouched.

18. In other words, Marsé's preface raises what Gayatri Spivak, in her preface to the English translation of Derrida's *De la Grammatologie*, calls 'the question of the preface' (1986). In brief, Derrida/Spivak's point is that the preface itself does not so much constitute a neutral recapitulation of the book's 'message' as a (post-rationalising) interpretation of the text.

If we read Marsé's account of why and how he wrote the novel, it raises several questions. Firstly, he claims to have written the text without any hope of its being published.¹⁹ The reason for this is his perception during the period 1968-70 that Francoist censorship was so entrenched that it would outlive the specific historical and ideological institutions which had produced it:

[la Censura] nos iba a sobrevivir a todos, no solamente al régimen fascista que la había engendrado sino incluso a la tan anhelada transición (o ruptura, según el frustrado deseo de muchos), instalándose ya para siempre, como una maldición gitana del Caudillo, en el mismo corazón de la España futura. (*Nota*, 5)

Despite the capitalisation, the censorship he is imagining here can be conceived not solely in its primary political sense of legislation or institutional mechanisms and practices (which would encompass writers' responses to particular instances of prohibition). Rather it suggests a prohibition that functions even when those particular institutions and laws have disappeared, that is, what is normally called 'self-censorship'. 'La Censura' would thus be all the more difficult to eradicate since it would live on not - or not simply - at the level of institutionalised social practice, but in the form of a psychic reflex (which might explain Marsé's reference to a mood of 'desesperanza oceánica').

Nevertheless, his despair was not paralysing since, combined with a more localized pessimism regarding his chances of publishing the projected text, it actually resulted in the lifting of an internal prohibition to which he now applies the term 'autocensura':

Me lié la manta a la cabeza y por vez primera en mi vida empecé a escribir una novela sin pensar en la reacción de la Censura ni en los editores ni en los lectores, ni mucho menos en conseguir anticipos, premios y halagos. Desembarazado por fin del pálido fantasma de la autocensura, pensaba sólo [...] en cierto compromiso contraído conmigo mismo, con mi propia niñez y mi adolescencia y nada más. (*Nota*, 5)²⁰

19. See *Nota a la nueva edición*, revised edition of *Si te dicen*, p. 5. Henceforth this will be referred to as *Nota*.

20. Marsé seems to disregard any truly unconscious aspect to this kind of psychic mechanism but sees it as an internalised form of prohibition which can be lifted at will. Secondly, he conflates what are different kinds of pressure on the writer: the political control exercised by the censor, and

Marsé's account of the circumstances surrounding the text's production and subsequent revision raise some interesting questions. According to him, the novel is primarily an intensely personal record of childhood and adolescence:

Pensaba sólo en los anónimos vecinos de un barrio pobre de Barcelona, en los furiosos muchachos de la posguerra que compartieron conmigo las calles leprosas y los juegos atroces, el miedo, el hambre y el frío [....] Jamás he escrito un libro tan ensimismado, tan personal, con esa fiebre interior y ese desdén por lo que el destino pudiera depararle. (ibid)

On the one hand, this self-declared and almost mystical detachment from worldly concerns is significant, since it means that the revision of the text cannot be justified on the grounds that Marsé deliberately made the original text defamiliarizing with a view to getting it past the censor. The fact that the text was unpublishable in Spain until after Franco's death confirms this. However, Marsé's assertion that *Si te dicen* was a project which involved a personal commitment and nothing more belies the fact that the text also bears witness to a particular place, community and time. It may well have been conceived initially as an exercise in fictionalised autobiography, but as a childhood lived during a particularly charged historical moment, it has an inescapable social dimension. Again, Marsé's representation of this moment is not neutral: it focuses on the physical deprivation and political repression which characterized the lives of the republican-sympathizing working classes in the early years of the Franco dictatorship. In particular, it highlights the all-pervasiveness of power relations - surely one of the reasons it would have attracted the attention of the censor, if published in Spain.

Finally, Marsé's disdain for the text's reception did not prevent him submitting it for an international literary competition. This is not to criticize Marsé the empirical author on the basis of some idealized notion of artistic integrity, nor to suggest he is being disingenuous. The point is that, even if Marsé thought the novel would never be published in Spain, or conceived it primarily as a personal project in which commercial considerations were secondary, the text was written to be read, and he gave thought to its potential market. The fact that he submitted it for the Mexican competition 'puesto que la edición española era una quimera' confirms this.

the commercial and aesthetic pressures associated with the editing and marketing process.

So why did Marsé embark on the revision of the 1976 edition? In the preface he claims he had always intended to revise the text (since, according to him, in its original form, it was never intended for publication). Three areas are identified as being in particular need of attention. Firstly, ‘erratas’; secondly, ‘oracion[es] desmañad[as]’; and thirdly and most importantly, instances of confusion or lack of clarity in the novel’s complex narrative structure: ‘el deseo [...] de arrojar un poco más de luz sobre algunas encrucijadas de una estructura narrativa compleja y ensimismada’.

Obviously, this begs the question of what (or whose) authority defines and guarantees stylistic propriety (the *Real Academia*? Marsé’s editors? Marsé?). More importantly, the notion of narrative clarification or clarity, introduced here, seems to have served as the main rationale for his revision. According to the preface, using multiple, contrasting and, moreover, *unreliable* voices to construct the narrative means it is ‘una espesa trama de signos y referencias y un ambiguo sistema de ecos y resonancias’, the ultimate purpose of which is to ‘sonambulizar al lector’. This suggests the poetic imagery and the reproduction of the patterns of speech and forms of oral narration have a hypnotic effect. Again, this fits the thematic emphasis on the power of storytelling in the novel: through the proliferation of different versions of events, the reader is drawn into a web of stories in which fantasy and reality merge, and her position mirrors that of the spellbound listeners to the *aventi*.

However, the ‘somnambulizing’ effect of the text is also linked to the notion of narrative ‘penumbra’. Perhaps the metaphor of ‘penumbra expositiva’ refers to the fact that parts of the narrative are extremely involved, structured in such a way that on occasions it appears to lack immediate transparency. This is seen as contributing to the reader’s feelings of being ‘somnambulized’. On the one hand, then, Marsé seems to be saying that in some parts of the text, narrative ‘penumbra’ is a deliberate hermeneutic and semic choice. It helps to constitute the various enigmas that form the hermeneutic code of the narrative, and it reproduces in the reader the confusion felt by the text’s characters - particularly its child narrators - in the face of the opaque postwar world.

On the other hand, there are those elements or ‘folds’ (‘repliegues’) in the narrative deemed by Marsé not to be directly linked to ‘los nervios secretos de la trama’ and thus where such opacity is unnecessary. Here the criterion of judgement

is not so much thematic as proairetic (it prevents the reader from determining the underlying sequence of action or behaviour) or hermeneutic (it actually obscures the story-telling code and dampens suspense). In such cases, 'penumbra expositiva' seems to be merely the result of carelessness or an inappropriate style, and the revision is intended to address this. However, it could be argued that it is far from self-evident that the narrative can easily be divided up into those parts forming its central nervous system, and those which are peripheral. Moreover, while the themes of the power of storytelling and the imbrication of fantasy and reality are undoubtedly central to the novel, the model of reading implied by Marsé's use of the term 'sonambulizar' places the reader in what is an essentially trance-like relation to the text.

It could be argued that the opacity of the narrative - principally caused by the destabilization of the boundaries between real and fictional events in the novel - does not solely have a 'sonambulizing' effect. It is precisely because of the proairetic difficulty created - which could also symbolize an epistemological one - that the reader begins to question the reliability of the various narrative voices, and the authority of their accounts. This gives rise to a more sceptical reading mode, intensifying the reader's desire to uncover the central enigmas of the novel. As discussed, the text generates this kind of tension precisely by drawing the reader's attention to certain narrative conventions and structures, for instance those of the classical detective novel, arousing generic expectations, and then subverting them. Thus, precisely because the truth status of what is being narrated is often 'undecidable', the reader is not a spellbound 'somnambulist' but, on the contrary, must remain fully engaged.

The revised edition, on this reading, can be seen as less experimental, less complex and, ultimately, less thought-provoking in its strengthening of the novel's realistic motivation. However, again, for the reasons discussed above, even the original text remains within the 'limit' of mimesis. While drawing the reader's attention to, and defamiliarizing, the systems of signification or the cultural codes on which its referential relation is based, the original text does not move beyond the realm of shared meanings: its cultural indicators remain clear enough for the reader to establish a referential relation to the postwar world.

La recuperación de la historia

The targets of Marsé's questioning of narrative authority and reliability in *Si te dicen* thus appear to be more limited than an anti-mimetic reading would suggest.²¹ It can be read as the novelist's imaginative revenge on Francoism, as Marsé implies in *Confidencias de un chorizo*: 'no renuncio en mis *aventis*, siempre que haga el caso, a vengarme de un sistema que saqueó y falseó mi niñez y mi adolescencia' (1977, 172). In other words, *Si te dicen* - and, by virtue of their subject matter, the other novels discussed in Chapter 2 - can be seen not as subverting the assumptions underpinning historiography as a realist discourse, as Simon's texts do, but, on the contrary, as an imaginative and *engagé* reconstruction of 'la memoria popular de los acontecimientos' (Marsé 1977, 172; see also Sinnigen 1979, 111; Labanyi 1989; Champeau 1983; Gould Levine 1979; Montenegro 1981; Garvey 1980).

On the other hand, Marsé repeatedly stresses the subjective and limited scope of his fictional vision. For instance, in relation to *Si te dicen*, he also denies that a political critique of Francoism is the main motivation behind, or 'message' of, the novel. In direct contradiction to the article from *Confidencias*, quoted above, for instance, he asserts:

Si..... es la historia de un barrio. No tiene ninguna pretensión de dar una visión totalizadora del franquismo en los años cuarenta. Pero, claro está, la novela ofrece una idea de eso [...]. En *Si.....* tampoco me propuse ninguna venganza personal contra los franquistas. Lo que me proponía era sencillamente reconstruir el barrio y la infancia mía en este barrio. (Sinnigen 1979, 118)

Marsé here reacts against the notion that his novel has 'una tesis antifalangista' (Amell, 111-12), and against his writing more generally being classified as 'political'. However, if we look at the historical context in which these comments are made (in

21. It is interesting to speculate that one could read the text's questioning of the 'referential relation' as itself a reference (and resistance) to a particular historical moment. One could apply Lyotard's paranoid characterisation of mimesis, in its appeal to shared semantic categories, as being part of a strategy of 'légitimation politique-étatique' (see Prendergast 1986, 240-46) to the production of mimetic texts in the Francoist period. A text that unproblematically cited a shared social reality would in this context be in league with the Francoist attempt to impose its 'narrative of legitimation'. It would be masking the authoritarian nature of the state and the heterogeneity of Spanish political and social reality through a mythological narrative of social and cultural homogeneity (as embodied in the slogan 'una patria, una Iglesia, un Caudillo').

his 1977 article 'La ficción', quoted in Amell, 111-12), Marsé's rejection must be seen in the context of a particular trend in publishing during the transition. This is the fashion for what he calls 'el libro-testimonio de supuesta rabiosa actualidad, preferentemente política' (ibid): Laín Entralgo's account of his falangist past is part of this trend. Marsé regards this 'resurgimiento de una literatura de crónica' as bringing in its wake a 'caída de la novela, [un] desprestigio de la ficción' (Sinnigen, 116). This in turn can be traced back to Marsé's aesthetic framework, to his rejection of a (Sartrean) model of committed writing based on the notion of the transparency of language: 'Qué es la "realidad" si no la atenazas fuertemente con la garra de las comillas?' (Amell, 112). Moreover, as discussed above, Marsé seems implicitly to see 'testimonial' writing as passive; involving the reproduction of a pre-given social reality, whereas his kind of writing means 'rectifying' reality (see below).

Perhaps one way of resolving the dilemma of whether - or how far - Marsé's reconstructions of postwar life can be read as a form of 'committed writing' is to see them within a hierarchy of authorial interests. Amell, for instance, asserts that political critique is not the *primary* function of Marsé's texts and, following José Luis Aranguren, argues that the Falange appears more as an implicit, background leitmotiv in *Si te dicen* (1984, 14; 109; 111-12). However, as has been seen from his comments on writing, this does not amount to the relegation of any referential relation in his texts to the historical and political reality of Spain. Indeed, as stated in Chapter 2, his obsession with childhood memories is explicitly related to the complex interconnectedness of past and present as the basis of both individual *and* 'national' identity. This means that, in attempting to refer to contemporary Spanish reality, his novels inevitably involve reference to the preceding '40 años de Franquismo' (Samaniego 1993, 387).

However, again, this perspective also involves resisting a manicheistic or dogmatic view of recent Spanish history. As seen, Marsé is iconoclastic in relation to both republican and nationalist discourses, and the repeated question asked in *Si te dicen* and *Un día* in relation to individual Republicans is how, on the one hand, to deal with the question of cultural and political memory. That is, how to establish a relation with the past which moves beyond what are seen as outmoded ideological positions and dubious conceptions of revolutionary violence and to engage with the present, while, on the other, resisting the current ideology, and not negating or

‘betraying’ past experience or history.

In *Si te dicen*, this question is also pertinent to the representation of Sarnita and Java, the principal storytellers. Sarnita’s refusal to abandon the imaginative world of the *aventi*, symbolized by his refusal to give up storytelling, even when the other boys lose interest, can be interpreted in various ways. Again, the adult Nito’s perpetual revisiting of the past, and his fictionalizing of it, can be seen as a form of solipsism, a refusal to confront the realities of adult life, as the other boys seem to suggest. It is this escapist and obsessive streak which may be partly responsible for his present low social status (see pp. 350 & 356). However, given both the positive gloss put on the boys’ imaginative world and the critical portrayal of the ‘adult’ world, the figure of Sarnita and the significance of his storytelling seem more complex.

In particular, his fate can be contrasted to that of Java. The price the latter pays for full integration in the ‘adult’ world and for social advancement is the erasure of his own past, and the common history he shares with the other boys and his family in particular, and with the *barrio* as a whole. In doing so, he acquiesces in the nationalist falsification of the country’s past, all of which is symbolized by his burning of the objects in the ‘trapería’ (*Si te dicen*, pp. 359-60). It is implicit in the opening paragraph of the book that Java’s ‘success’ not only involves the loss of personal integrity and meaning but, on the collective level, the betrayal of the *barrio*’s cultural memory (*Si te dicen*, p. 57). While Sarnita is trapped by his memories, his continued imaginative engagement with the past can be read, more positively, as a refusal to perform closure on the past, to regard it as a finished or dead narrative. In the particular historical context, this can be read as a form of resistance to the narrative hegemony of the regime.

In *Un día volveré*, a relation is suggested between the boys’ capacity to produce *aventis* often incorporating snippets of popular memory, and the wider civil society of the *barrio*:

Un par de años después [del 51], cuando teníamos más de once, volveríamos a encontrarle [a Jan] ocasionalmente en nuestras convulsas y atrafagadas *aventis* de los domingos en el vestíbulo del cine Rovira o en el jardín de Las Animas. Ensoñaciones que trazaban un amplio arco de refinadas venganzas y brutales ajustes de cuenta [....] Un hombre con semejantes atributos, ex boxeador y ex pistolero, era una combinación invencible y fascinante. Ciertamente, ahora nos parecía ya lejos el tiempo feliz de las *aventis*, en las que todo había resultado siempre inmediato y necesario como la luz, duro y limpio como el diamante. Ahora, a la distancia de seis o siete años, cuando ya habíamos cambiado la escuela por el taller, el colmado o la taberna, sentíamos algo así como si el barrio hubiese empezado a morir para nosotros; mayores para seguir invocando fantasmas sentados en corro, pero no lo bastante para dedicarnos plenamente a ligar chavalas [....] Y entonces, cuando el vecindario ya estaba sustituyendo su capacidad de asombro y de leyenda por la resignación y el olvido [...] cuando la indiferencia y el tedio amenazaban sepultar para siempre aquel viejo rechinar de tranvías y de viejas *aventis*, y los hombres en la taberna no contaban ya sino vulgares historias de familia y de aburridos trabajos, cuando empezaba a flaquear en todos aquel mínimo de odio y de repulsa necesarios para seguir viviendo, regresaba por fin a su casa el hombre que, según el viejo Suau, más de uno en el barrio hubiese preferido mantener lejos, muerto o encerrado para siempre. (pp. 16-18)

This passage suggests that the ability to construct *aventis* - and, more generally, the imaginative power which the *aventis* both express and develop - is a sign of psychological and, moreover, civic health. Again, we can relate this to the Ricœurian view of mimetic configuration, discussed above, as a ‘a congenital property of man’s natural mode of constructing and inhabiting the world’ (Prendergast 1986, 19 & 21-22). Ricœur sees the processes of ‘configuration’ by the writer and ‘transfiguration’ by the reader through the creation and reception of the representations of the mimetic text as being a fundamental constituent of cultural and social cohesion. For Ricœur, the basis of fiction is history or ‘tradition’ - conceived as ‘the living transmission of an innovation that is always capable of being reactivated through a return to the most creative moments of poetic making’ (1981, 86; Prendergast 1986, 237).²²

The *aventi*, by telling *particular kinds* of stories about the past - those which actively engage the imagination, in contrast to the ‘vulgares historias de familia y de

22. In Ricœur’s account of mimesis, the reader is seen as the ‘repository of the “tradition”’, since reader recognition acts as a conservative force on the text, drawing on the tacit forms of pre-understanding. However, this reader is not a subject conceived in individualist terms but in social and collective terms. Prendergast emphasises that, for Ricœur, ‘[n]arrative time is “public time”; [...] Plot discloses a “structure of care”, and its teleology a “narrative of preoccupation”, a caring about how we make sense of a common world through projections towards and retrospections from common “ends”’ (1986, 238).

aburridos trabajos' told by the adults - can thus be read in the light of Ricœur's theory of mimetic fiction as involving the imaginative and dynamic re-description of a shared social reality. It is also an attempt to make sense of this shared reality as it develops through time. The substitution of the 'vulgares historias' for discussion of the recent conflict and the actions of the *maquis* by the men in the tavern symbolizes the waning of their interest in their wider political and social reality. It represents the de-militarisation and normalisation of postwar Spain and yet is described negatively by Marsé as the weakening of 'aquel mínimo de odio y de repulsa necesarios para seguir viviendo'.

The adults' loss of the 'capacidad de asombro y de leyenda' is represented as kind of living death. Again, this involves a particularly passive relation to the events of the recent past (resignation to the status quo and forgetfulness of past hopes and ideals), so that the *aventi* can be seen as a mode of imaginative resistance to the regime. However, a forgetful relation to the past ('el olvido como estrategia de vivir') is also recognised by the adult narrator at the end of *Un día* as a possible mode of survival. In the final chapter - set in the historically charged moment of the summer prior to the death of Franco in November 1975 - the now adult narrator expresses a complex and nuanced view of the problem of the cultural memory of the Civil War. On the one hand, he suggests that it is right to bury the impulse towards political violence, the revolutionary doctrines or the 'convulsos afanes' that motivated Jan in his youth, as symbolised by Jan's buried pistol which he has no desire to unearth. On the other hand, there is still a political need to keep the memory of the past conflict alive:

Hoy ya no creemos en nada, nos están cocinando a todos en la olla podrida del olvido, porque el olvido es una estrategia de vivir, si bien algunos, por si acaso, aún mantenemos el dedo en el gatillo de la memoria. (*Un día*, p. 393)

Thus if there is a sense that, if clinging on to the past like the *maquis* is a negation of the historical reality of their defeat, to bury or deny the experience of the Civil War and its aftermath is not a solution either (see also Devlin 1984, 33). Thus a major implicit theme of Marsé's texts is the possibility, desirability – and the *necessity*, in the context of Spain's recent past - of preserving a cultural memory of the War. The texts also imply that it is necessary to retain a notion of historical truth - in this

context of the popular experience of the Civil War and Franco period - even though writing a 'true' (in the sense of ideology-free) account of this period is seen as equally, if differently, problematic. This point will now be discussed further in relation to the portrayal of Luys Forest, the regime historian, in *La muchacha*, written just after the death of Franco (1978).²³

El lotófago

Discussing the genesis of *La muchacha*, Marsé makes the general claim that the realist novel is a more immediate and human way of approaching the past than historical accounts proper. The reasons he gives are as follows:

Yo, por lo menos, encuentro que cuando se escribe la historia, incluso con las mejores intenciones de lograr la objetividad, siempre los planteamientos políticos enturbian la visión de la realidad. Por eso, por ejemplo, cuando quiero saber algo de la Francia del XIX, me voy a Stendhal, me voy a Flaubert, me voy a Balzac. Me voy a los embusteros [...] En una novela, en una ficción, la visión es más humana, es más próxima, es más creíble. (Sinnigen 1979, 118)

Marsé first appears to be making much the same point as Labanyi when she opposes 'memory' and 'fantasy' in relation to *Si te dicen*: he prefers fiction to history because the novel makes no claim to be accurate or 'objective' - indeed, what he associates with the French nineteenth-century novelists he cites is the notion of deception. However, he also says that, because historical accounts are always ideologically-biased, they do not give a *clear* 'visión de la realidad', therefore implicitly, if paradoxically, valorising the texts of Flaubert and the other novelists for their *vraisemblance*. In other words, it is because of their *vraisemblance*, what Prendergast calls the production of a 'semblance of true discourse about the world' (1986, 68) that Marsé prefers learning about nineteenth-century France through nineteenth century French realism. In addition, he appears to link the cognitive element of mimetic fiction (it is more 'human'; or 'closer' to the reader) to its *vraisemblance* (it is more 'believable'). This suggests that while stressing the inevitable subjectivism

23. White (1992) sees this question as 'central' to the Transition period in Spain. However, she also says it is 'one of the recurrent themes of Marsé's work' (117), as discussion of 'El Embrujo', a definitely post-transition novel has shown.

or 'falseness' of its vision, he still attributes a referential relation to it.

This apparent contradiction highlights the issues raised by Marsé's representation of the regime chronicler, Luys Forest, in *La muchacha*. As is well documented, the idea for the novel originated from his reading of Laín Entralgo's *Descargo de conciencia*:

Se trata simplemente de la historia de un señor que tiene un pasado falangista, [...] comprometido con el régimen franquista y que, en la época de la instalación de la democracia en España, él pretende justificarse con un libro, es decir, es el tipo de memorias con las que pretende justificar un pasado. (Samaniego, 380; see also Sherzer 1985, 30; Sinnigen 117-18; Amell, 94).

However, Marsé claims that the story was not simply motivated by the problem of 'desmemoria' on a national scale in the historical context of the Transition, but also by a more abstract, philosophical interest. He compares Forest's efforts to make reality conform to his fantasy to those of the novelist writing a book:

Otra cosa que me interesó es que este personaje, en este intento desesperado por corregir la realidad de su vida, se parecía mucho a la personalidad del novelista y a la naturaleza del oficio de escribir una novela, es decir, rectificar continuamente la realidad. A través de esto he querido hacer, en el terreno personal, íntimo, un homenaje a la literatura de ficción en su lucha, bastante desigual hoy en día, contra la literatura testimonial [...] Este personaje, el hombre que durante tantos años escamoteó, saqueó y falsificó las luchas del pasado en la memoria popular, el patrimonio común de la verdad, reivindica su derecho a rectificar su pasado desdeñando la engañosa realidad de los documentos de los "archivos oficiales". Este tipo, un historiador franquista, que ha falseado la historia de los últimos cuarenta años, puesto a falsearlo todo, intenta hoy falsear su propio pasado. Se inventa una ficción - como hace el novelista - y yo le concedo la gracia de que su invención se convierta en realidad, deseo onírico de todo escritor. (Interview in *Destino*, 26/10/78, quoted in Sherzer 1985, 30-31; see also Samaniego, 380).

Marsé makes clear here that the motive behind Forest's incorporation of the seven 'fictional' elements into his autobiography is to fabricate a new persona more in tune with the democratic times by implying that his disenchantment with the regime has a long history.²⁴ In order to make these incidents more realistic, Forest explicitly

24. The seven elements are: (1) the bullet hole in the wall (pp. 17-18; 174); (2) the shaving-off of his moustache (pp. 21-25; 86); (3) the attribution of his limp to a fall into the latrine trench or to the hit-and-run rather than a war-wound (pp. 45, 67; 109); (4) the story of the attempted hit-and-run (pp. 48, 67); (5) Soledad's mysterious illness (pp. 58-59; 63-66); (6) Soledad's adultery with Tey

attempts to construct a *vraisemblable* discourse by using tricks such as the use of the present tense (see p. 64) and the incorporation of authentic realist detail (see pp. 32; 64; 131-33 and 163). Thus, for instance, as he says in relation to the story of Soledad's adultery with Tey: '[a]unque el mórbido conjunto estaba fraudulentamente manipulado, las partes que lo componían eran reales' (p. 133 see also p. 66).

Thus Forest's assertion to Mariana that he makes no claim to be 'truthful' ('yo nunca he querido ser testimonial, ni siquiera en estas memorias'; '[n]o intento reflejar la vida, sino rectificarla.', p.170) can be read simply as an expression of his underlying bad faith.²⁵ The intercalation of Mariana's comments on her uncle's manuscript, and the description of their 'interviews' leave the reader in no doubt as to Forest's distasteful attempts at self-justification. The tone of scepticism as to his motives is established from the outset in Mariana's letter to Flora in Chapter Two (for instance, Mariana describes her uncle as 'ese farsante', p. 16).

On the other hand, Mariana's ironic responses (see for instance pp. 27-30), and her disabused view of her uncle's 'repelente pasado' as the official chronicler, or rather mythifier, of postwar reality render Forest's attempts at self-justification so transparent as to be almost farcical.²⁶ Moreover, Forest is not a totally antipathetic character: despite the ideological and generational gulf that separates them, he and Mariana develop a frank and affectionate relationship. Moreover, precisely because his efforts at deception are so blatantly preposterous, he appears more human to the reader.²⁷ Indeed, as the writing of his 'autobiography' progresses, his attempt to falsify the past seems motivated more by the desire of an old man to invent a fictional compensation for what he has lost, or failed to do in his life (for instance, the 'invention' of the night spent with his sister-in-law Mariana):

(pp. 128-36); (7) the night spent with Mariana (pp. 146; 153-61; 178).

25. See also pp. 13; 27; 116. On p. 27, for instance, Forest claims that the reason he is not explicit that the act of shaving off his moustache is a private rebellion against the nationalist victory, and thus symbolises the beginning of his process of disillusionment with the regime, is because of his poetic taste for 'symbolism' and for allusion over explanation.

26. For instance, Mariana describes him as 'antaoño tan dotado para la fabulación y el mito al servicio del poder (que impuso por decreto la realidad, su descripción de la realidad)' (p. 69; see also p. 170).

27. See, for instance, his claim to have championed the cause of the Catalan language (46). Or his claim in the blurb he drafts for his autobiography, that he invented his chronicles of the postwar for the philosophical reason that 'la invención sobrevive siempre a la dudosa realidad que dictan los políticos' (p. 176).

El memorialista suspendió los dos índices sobre el teclado. Alto ahí, no te embales, se dijo: sería una buena pifia, desde el estricto punto de vista narrativo, no concentrar la atención del lector en lo que ha sido y es el móvil secreto: justificarme. ¿Por qué, después de haberlo planeado y meditado tanto soy tan descuidado y perezoso respecto al objetivo que me propuse con estos injertos ficticios? ¿Por qué, en cambio, me afano hasta la náusea y la tortura en conseguir dotar de alguna realidad estas invenciones? ¿No será que empiezo a interesarme menos la justificación pública del ayer infamante que la mera posibilidad de reinvertir la historia, lograr que el río del pasado - turbio o cristalino, a quién puede ya importarle - remonte el curso hasta su fuente y me devuelva todo aquello a lo que renuncié un día o me fue arrebatado....? (pp. 161-62)

Above all, however, because the novel is mainly focalized through Forest, the reader is shown that he does not deceive himself about the 'infamante' nature of his past and his 'móvil secreto'. He is shown to be capable of self-parody, for instance he describes how he carefully cultivated the persona of the wounded war hero to seduce the Monteys sisters (p. 43). Thus the overall tone of the novel is more comic and satirical than denunciatory, as the beginning of the above quotation shows. Some critics, notably Amell, see Forest as a wholly unsympathetic character (1984,101), but he seems rather to be a version of the 'pijoaparte' figures in *Últimas tardes* or *Si te dicen*. From humble social origins, he attempts to climb the social ladder by seducing a middle-class woman (commented upon explicitly in the novel by Mariana, p. 58) and by throwing in his lot with the regime. Of course, the difference here is that Forest's attempts at social climbing meet with success.

As stated below, the irony of the novel turns on his fantasy belief that he can successfully 'reinvent' the past. However, despite (or rather because of) this, Forest is represented less as a dangerous ideologue than as a pathetic, isolated figure who no longer has any real power or represents any real threat to the nascent democracy. His books are no longer even read by the public (p. 170) and he is out of touch with the new Spain: Mariana comments that he does not watch television and hardly reads the newspapers (p. 169). His ignorance is particularly evident in relation to the values of the younger generation, as is shown by his pompous reactions to Mariana's hippy behaviour.²⁸ Ironically, however, it is also because Forest knows - or thinks - that his

28. See for instance p. 82, when he throws Elmyr out of the house, or p. 89 when he hypocritically disapproves of his niece's sexual behaviour.

life and deeds have been forgotten that he dares to reinvent the details of his life (see p. 184).

The following description of Forest walking along the beach, ignored by the villagers who previously feared him, represents him above all as an anachronism:

Ya habían agotado hacía años los comentarios socarrones sobre el vecino ilustre; para [la gente del pueblo] no era más que un remoto hijo del pueblo que se había marchado un día para ir a enriquecerse en algún oscuro repliegue de la historia oficial, hoy casi un forastero, un paseante solitario [...] Forest les ignoraba o simulaba hacerlo. Con los tapones de cera en los oídos, iba con una arrogancia tensa en la nuca felina, una despectiva elocuencia, como si caminara entre estatuas derribadas y símbolos rotos. (pp. 143-44)

However, it is still important that Forest's attempts to rewrite history as he sees fit end in complete failure. He intuits on several occasions that he is not in control of events - symbolised by the growing 'disorder' in the house, with the disappearance, appearance, or displacement of objects, and culminating in the confirmation of the real existence of the 'fictional' elements he has inserted into his autobiography.²⁹ The most powerful representation of his growing disorientation is the power-cut episode, when he experiences a sudden, vertiginous sense of power similar to his belief that he can reorder the past:

Experimentó el riesgo de la tierra de nadie entre la luz y la tierra de nadie entre la luz y la tiniebla, se sintió de nuevo en libertad en un escenario que ya no existía, que los demás ignoraban o habían olvidado y del que por tanto él podía disponer a su antojo, trastocar las coordenadas, invertir los puntos de referencia. No se sentía indefenso aquí, ni desorientado, no era como cuando salía a pasear por la playa al atardecer, cabizbajo y sintiendo en la espalda las miradas de todos, presentes y ausentes, vivos y muertos, con su memoria precediéndole siempre como una prolongación artificiosa de sí mismo, como si de una prótesis se tratara, más que de una memoria. (p. 184)

Ironically, Forest is in fact mistaken as to his location in the house and even as to the existence of the storm: his consequent disorientation is symbolic of the fact that his sense of being able to falsify at will the referents of his past life is illusory. The (dis)appearances which also contribute to his growing sense of bewilderment are often perpetrated by the dog who is given the name of an icon of his niece's

29. The allusion to the painted eye of the boat, the *Lotófago*, underlines the irony of this incident, as will be discussed below.

revolutionary generation, Mao, or associated directly with Mariana as a principle of disorder and anarchic pleasure.³⁰ At the beginning of the novel, the arrival of Mariana, and more specifically her offer to type his manuscript, provokes a hubristic feeling of unease in the writer:

Forest observó que llevaba un collar de perro alrededor del cuello. Tuvo en ese momento la sensación de empezar a ser cómplice de algo, de un desorden convenido a espaldas suyas, inevitable. (p. 12)

His paranoid feeling of being the victim of a conspiracy continues throughout the novel (see for instance p.105). There is a double irony at work here: Forest takes pains to use authentic period detail in order to create an effect of *vraisemblance* which will trick the reader into believing his (as he believes) fictional account. However, in the last chapter of the novel Forest and the reader discover that what he thought was invented detail was, in fact, true - although this does not alter the falsity of his claim to have become ideologically disillusioned with the regime as early as 1942 (see p. 25). This double irony is made explicit retrospectively in the incident when Forest visits Dr Pla to ask about the (fictional) illness he will attribute to Soledad, on the pretext that he needs the information for a character in a novel (p. 76).

Analogous to the novel's play on the themes of reality and appearance is the way it blurs the boundary between fiction and history, questioning the 'truth values' normally associated with historical discourse. This can be seen, for instance, when Mariana comments on the two different types of writing Forest has produced:

Tu obra parece tener dos vertientes muy diferenciadas. De un lado la crónica de la posguerra. Es la que te dio prestigio y dinero pero a mí no me gusta, está llena de loas triunfalistas, de basura ideológica y de embustes. [...] En cambio, tus libros, tus relatos y tus novelas, que tuvieron menos aceptación, me encantan. Es extraño: cuando pretendes ser testimonial no resultas verosímil, no te creo, y cuando inventas descaradamente, digamos cuando mientes sin red, consigues reflejar la verdad. (170)

However, does this play on the themes of appearance versus reality, fact versus fiction suggest a more general questioning of the realist premises of historical

30. See pp. 83, 111, 137, and 179-82.

accounts, as in Simon's texts, or inform an underlying vision of history? Should we see in the story of Forest a critique of the figure of 'el historiador' in the abstract who fails to recognize the (inevitable) contaminations of ideological bias and unconscious desire in his supposedly objective discourse, as occurs in *Les Géorgiques*? Or can it be read, in the specific context of recent Spanish history, simply as a comment on the way in which the Franco regime, as symbolized by Forest, has replaced historical fact with an explicitly ideological discourse constructed around blatant lies and hegemonic misrecognitions? In other words, does *La muchacha* launch a more radical attack on the 'taken-for-grantedness' of the referential relation in all historical discourse or not?

The representation of Forest's attempts to replace history with fiction suggests that, despite the novel's meta-fictional elements, the boundaries between reality and appearance, history and fiction are not radically or permanently subverted in the text. Firstly, it is implied that it is Forest's long praxis of mythifying the day-to-day reality of the country and of deceiving others and himself which, ironically, has made him incapable of discriminating between appearance and reality when it comes to his own personal history. Mariana senior comments that he has never been aware of what was really occurring around him (pp. 195 and 197). The novel shows that, as concerns the reality or fictionality of the present or the past, any confusion between the two ultimately results from Forest's own self-absorption: this is his hubris. On the hermeneutic level, the novel eventually resolves those enigmas or episodes where it is not clear what is real and what is imaginary (or, rather, what their referential status in the novelistic discourse is). Two examples are: Elmyr's gender (pp. 80-81); and the photo of David's dog (pp. 171-72). The clearest symbol of this is, however, the discovery of the non-existence of the eponymous 'bragas de oro' (p. 190).

Sherzer makes a similar point when he contrasts the confusion stemming from the indeterminacy of the narrative viewpoint in *Si te dicen* with the production of confusion in *La muchacha*:

[En] *La muchacha*...., toda la incoherencia procede de la falta de perspectiva de un personaje, Luys, falta de perspectiva que resulta de sus remordimientos de conciencia causados por acciones previas [...] Hay una planteamiento totalmente quijotesco de niveles de realidad. [...] Pero todos estos niveles vuelven constantemente hacia un solo personaje, uno que comparte la culpa oficial de la violencia, represión e incoherencia de este personaje como escape personal de la realidad. (1982, 181)

Forest's hubris consists precisely in his dangerous belief that he can wilfully treat the past as if it were a novel, to be rewritten at will, and his discovery that Mariana is probably his daughter is his moment of anagnorisis. Significantly, she is described at the end of the novel as the 'deslenguada hija del desencanto y de la impostura, de las argucias de la memoria trashumante' (p. 199). The relationship between Mariana and Forest can be seen as a kind of inverted Oedipus story, and it is interesting to read it in the light of Prendergast's account of how mimetic 'recognition' is seen by some critics as involved in the production of ideologically-suspect 'fables of identity'. Prendergast describes how the critic Terence Cave re-reads Aristotle's *Poetics* using Carlo Ginzburg's modern re-interpretation of aristotelian *anagnorisis* via the notion of the *paradigme cynégétique* or 'conjectural paradigm', that is, the idea that mimesis involves a 'social policing' of identities. This kind of reading can be traced back, according to Prendergast, to doubts about the logical status of Aristotle's categories, that is, over 'the invasion of rhetoric into the mimetic system' (1986, 220).³¹

The 'conjectural paradigm' denotes a 'primitive form of understanding based on inference from the material trace, the "clue"'. It originates, according to Ginzburg, in the tracking activity of the hunter: he suggests that knowledge began with hunting, and that this activity was also the origin of narrative. The 'conjectural paradigm' is thus identified as a form of 'popular' knowledge which, although usually rejected as involving superstitious and irrational beliefs, has also at times become absorbed into the dominant intellectual culture and used primarily a form of social monitoring and control: Ginzburg cites the emergence of criminology in the late nineteenth century

31. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle establishes a hierarchy of different kinds of 'recognition' for *anagnorisis* or the recognition of identities, based on different kinds of inference, from 'best' to 'least artistic' (the latter including "recognition by signs", material traces, bodily marks, physical tokens'). Prendergast argues this amounts to an acknowledgement on Aristotle's part that 'misrecognition' is possible - hence the attempt to exclude from the mimetic plot what is 'potentially threatening to the integrity of the knowledge it supposedly embodies' (1986, 220).

(see Prendergast 1986, 220-21). Despite the speculativeness of this account, Prendergast argues that it can throw interesting light on the debate about mimesis. In Aristotle's *Poetics* the recognition scene literally involves 'the recognition of persons', that is, it turns on the revelation of the true identity and kinship relations of the characters (the Oedipus story being the supreme example). Thus mimesis can be seen as 'a system for keeping tabs on identities'. Aristotle's attempts to define an inferential hierarchy would represent his efforts to elide the problem of the 'trace', which leads one from 'the solid ground of inductive and deductive reasoning to the less secure ground of abductive reasoning' (1986, 221). What Aristotle fears is that identity is always in doubt, because there can never be complete certainty over paternity. Mimetic narrative attempts to mask this fear by "plotting" family ties, legislating positions within the sexual order, determining who belongs to whom, who lies with whom, who the father is' (1986, 221).³²

Read through this theoretical lens, Forest's (incestuous) sexual desire for Mariana would be related to his desire to transgress or blur the epistemological boundary between fact and fiction, the referential and the imaginary, which is the foundation of mimesis - and, concomitantly, upset the social order of family relationships. Forest's actions invite the eruption of narrative and sexual disorder, one symptom of which is the disorder that erupts when Mariana arrives, and the sexual confusions that arise from her bisexual promiscuity. It is therefore possible to read Forest's *anagnorisis*, which culminates in his decision to commit suicide (p. 199), as involving the restoration of sexual and narrative order. There might also be a double Oedipal echo in the rather mysterious vision which Forest has of his father in the penultimate paragraph of the novel. Occuring just before his failed suicide attempt, this image is also linked to the historical context: the waves of the sea - 'que se sucedían pero no parecían avanzar' - are compared to columns of falangist soldiers in combat.

This final vision of his republican father, on the point of death after being released from prison, where he has been tortured by the Nationalists, is very similar

32. The development of the novel is then speculatively traced back to this primitive anxiety as the 'transformation of the "basic nucleus" of the [Freudian] Family Romance from individual to social plot, from family unit to whole society.' (1986, 222). In support of this view, Prendergast cites the thematic centrality of marriage and adultery in the eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, and the fact that 'adultery and crime' are, respectively, the key preoccupations of the 'bourgeois' novel and the 'popular' novel in the nineteenth century.

in terms of the language and images used to the previous description on pp. 32-33. The latter is described as an ‘evocación verídica’ around which Forest constructs the fictional incident of shaving his moustache before his father’s funeral as an ‘último tributo a una conciencia siempre valerosa y despierta’. It is difficult to resist interpreting these two descriptions as a further political comment on Forest’s own ‘derrota’. Forest describes his father as a ‘grave y cenicienta figura’ and refers to ‘las humillaciones que yo no pude evitarle al final de su vida: el sentimiento de la derrota, el exilio frustrado, la cárcel, el hijo que milita en el otro bando’ (p. 32).

Forest’s life is in fact constructed upon the oedipal ‘murder’ of his father, both in terms of his full complicity with the regime which literally caused his father’s death and symbolically in his betrayal of his father’s beliefs and thus his family’s identity. Ironically, this final scene shows that Forest has come full circle to resemble his father, as a helpless old man subject to a ‘vertiginosa caída en una desmemoria centrífuga’ (p. 33). However, Forest’s ‘desmemoria’ is not the result of senility or mental breakdown but represents (in terms of his conscious motivation, at least) an attempt to justify his own, now bankrupt ideology. Finally, he is denied the tragic status of both his father (p. 33) and of the archetypal tragic protagonist such as Oedipus, since he is denied the dignity of death: his suicide attempt ends in a bathetic failure when his pistol jams.

However, the *dénouement* of the novel, in restoring the boundaries between reality and fiction, should not necessarily be given a ‘conservative’ reading, involving the kind of ‘narrative policing’ of social (and sexual) identities discussed above. Primarily, because in historical terms the literal ‘policing of social and sexual identities’ is more easily identified in Marsé’s texts with a nationalist regime that is represented as aberrational in terms of its degradation of human relationships. In this sense, it is possible to give the Luys-Mariana relationship a more positive reading. Sherzer, for instance, while noting the oedipal associations, interprets their relationship as ‘la lucha metafórica entre la represión y el placer, entre la civilización y el narcisismo, o, en términos más específicos, entre el tradicionalismo español y el “anarquismo” de los jóvenes de hoy’ (1982, 187).

On this reading, Mariana and the blurring of sexual boundaries she embodies is the perversion which constitutes the direct rebellion of the pleasure principle against the reality principle or repression, personified by Luys. The fact that Luys finally accepts Mariana's sexual offer means that he moves towards the world of perversion. However, when he discovers Mariana is his daughter, the perversion is too serious: metaphorically, Luys's rejection of perversion involves a return to repression and the defeat of his attempt to undo the past (1982, 187-88).

However, it can be argued that the restoration of narrative order is not inherently conservative for other reasons. Firstly, because, as stated in the Introduction (see p. 11 above), mimetic order can be seen not as oppressive but enabling, in terms of how it allows the writer and reader to negotiate the world in terms of 'familiar, shared images and representations' (Prendergast 1986, 7). Forest's downfall would not therefore represent a 'repressive' narrative closure, in which the resolution of the reality/appearance enigma confirms the power of the omniscient narrating subject. In fact, what the novel questions is precisely Forest (the writer's), status as an 'auteur-dieu', able to invert or blur the order of the real and the fictional wilfully, deluding the reader into suspending her disbelief by means of the illusionistic trickery of the 'reality effect'.

On a formal level it is true that the retrospective irony of the novel functions effectively because there is ultimately no radical subversion of the concept of narrative authority, as occurs in *Si te dicen*. The text never varies from its third person narrative voice, focalized either through Forest or externally through a meta-narrator (with the exception of Mariana's letter to Flora and Elmyr's letter; see Amell, 1984, 96-97). In the final pages, the external narrator's comments, though again comparing fiction and reality, explicitly re-establish the boundary between the two:

Pero en aquel laberinto de refugios ruinosos donde se había extraviado, la laboriosa ficción ya no podía hacerle la menor concesión a la veleidosa realidad, ya no era capaz de respetarla ni confirmarla por más tiempo. Y allí estaba esperándole la convocada, puntual y solitaria bala camino de su cerebro... (p. 200)

One interpretation, again through Prendergast's account of mimesis, would be that the message of the novel is to reiterate the importance of the referential relation, the fact that, without any reader recognition, Forest's autobiographical text remains at the

level of a solipsistic fantasy. It is significant that the other character in the novel associated with producing images which mix reality and fantasy, blurring or falsifying the boundaries between the two, is the other Falangist artist, Tey, in this case through a visual medium. Forest comments that ‘el estilo intemporal y romántico del pobre Chema [...] fue siempre el de pintar las cosas no como son, sino como a uno le gustaría que fuesen’ (see pp. 113-14; 134-37; and 180).

In this novel, reader recognition is, in the final instance, represented as not being dependent on a convincing style alone. Forest may be bewitched by style (‘víctima del embrujo de una eufonía falaz, había estado toda la tarde perfeccionando aquella larga parrafada cuyos acentos, de una cadencia engañosa, parecían tener más sentido que las palabras’) but this leads to his downfall and humiliation, and it does not ultimately alter the referential status of his fictional memoirs. What *La muchacha* emphasizes is that, in this case, the past is not Forest’s personal patrimony. What is at stake is not simply subjective or ‘autobiographical’ truth, the details of Forest’s own personal memories of the past. Because of the public position he has occupied and, more importantly, because of his role in cementing francoist ideology through the production of ‘mythologies’ (in the Barthesian sense), Forest’s personal biography has an inescapable political and cultural dimension. He may wish to be a lotus eater (see pp. 92 and 185), but he cannot force others to partake of the same forgetfulness.

Thus Marsé’s novel, like *Les Géorgiques*, draws our attention to the fragility of historical memory. However, it also implicitly stresses the need for vigilance against would-be ‘lotófagos’. We can relate this to Labanyi’s essay, ‘History and Hauntology’. Labanyi argues, in relation to post-Franco Spain, that the postmodern notion that there is no direct, unmediated access to the past expresses not just a response to ‘the ubiquitousness of the media, advertising and heritage industries, which convert history into a consumer commodity’ but also constitutes ‘a recognition of the spectral quality of the traces left by the past on the present, and of the moral imperative that requires us to bear witness to “the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace”; namely, ghosts’ (2000, 80). The final image of Forest’s Republican father is such a ghostly presence, returning to remind his son of his failure to bear historical witness.

However, unlike the postmodernist view of history expressed above, in *La*

muchacha, history and cultural memory is represented as an inter-subjective construct which cannot be seen in purely relativistic terms as a collection of endlessly competing individual 'stories'. Implicit in the notion that Forest's discourse on the *posguerra* involves censorship, ideological misrecognition, and falsification is another notion that there is a censored, misrecognised, or falsified 'truth' to uncover. This is fundamental, even if the latter is understood not as an absolute, but as the legacy of a process of contestation, difference, and consensus.

Conclusion

This thesis has shown how a close reading of the representation of the Spanish Civil War in selected novels of Juan Marsé and Claude Simon, ultimately, reveals the traces of their different historical, political and intellectual contexts.

Both writers' representations of the War are primarily concerned with the early revolutionary period of the Civil War in Barcelona. However, while both writers are iconoclastic in their representations of the Republican Left, Simon's representations of the Republicans are far more negative and critical than Marsé's texts.

Simon identifies the city of Barcelona with the revolution, and uses overwhelmingly negative tropes of bodily decay and physical malfunction to describe both the city and the events that occur within it. Furthermore, both thematically and formally, while his texts do not represent the revolution as a repetition in an absolute sense, they use universalising allusions and structures of movement without progress to refer to the Spanish revolution which, in a totalising gesture, are then extended to cover history *per se*. Combined with an implicit and explicit critique of political *engagement*, principally in *Les Géorgiques*, his texts overall express a vision of history which is pessimistic about the ability of individuals and collectivities to intervene to change their historical situations. In doing so, they constitute a rejection of historical 'meta-narratives' of social change and progress.

The same vision cannot be detected in Marsé's texts. It is true that his texts also involve a questioning of the narrative of political *engagement*, particularly through their subversion of the mythical narrative of the heroic postwar freedom fighter or *maquis*. However, this is balanced by a focus on the experience of the *vencidos* in the Civil War combined with a critical representation of the Francoist authority figures or *vencedores*. Overall, Marsé's texts do not contain the same explicit or implicit level of engagement with philosophical issues as Simon's texts, and they do not involve the same questioning of historical meta-narratives. However, in the context of recent Spanish history, they implicitly raise the question of the ethical responsibility of historical representations of the Civil War, questioning the relativism of Simon's view of historiography, and emphasising the inter-subjective nature of cultural memory.

We have also seen that Simon's critique of political *engagement* rests on a tendentious representation of both the biography and the writing of George Orwell. Moreover, his historical vision both determines, and is determined by, an aesthetic rejection of what Simon regards as the realist premises of historical narration. Both Simon's - and, to a more limited extent, Marsé's - novels make the reader critically aware of processes of narrativisation and representation, and in so doing produce representations of the war that can be termed, in part, 'anti-realist'.

This thesis began by locating the question of 'realism' or 'anti-realism' in the texts studied within a wider theoretical framework: that of the critique of realism within poststructuralist French theory, beginning with the work of Barthes. In doing so, it aimed to show on a theoretical level the logical impossibility of producing a completely 'anti-realist' representation. The close readings of the novels have argued that this is particularly the case for representations where the referent is real historical events. In practice, we have seen that Simon's texts are, in fact, a mixture of anti-realist and (phenomenologically) realist elements: his critique of Orwell's narrative, in particular, involves an uncritical assertion of extra-diegetic narrative authority. Marsé's texts can mainly be situated within a European social realist tradition, and even the formal choices made in his most anti-realist text, *Si te dicen que caí*, can be given a referential explanation. The latter must be understood in the context of the actual political situation in postwar Francoist Spain: it is this context of censorship and the ideological manipulation of history in which Marsé's fictional subversion of the authority of official historiography occurs.

Moreover, while rejecting progressive meta-narratives and questioning an Enlightenment model of historical progress, we have seen that Simon's texts themselves, in fact, posit an alternative, anti-progressive historical telos of repeated fundamental human experiences.

Finally, for all the differences between Marsé's and Simon's texts, what both writers show is that the historical events of the Spanish Civil War continue to provide fertile ground in particular for fiction which is alert to questions and issues of narrative reliability and authority in the representation of historical events and processes.

Appendix One

SDC1 (original, 1976 version)

Sor Paulina cabeceaba sobre sus sedantes, pero el celador insistió: quería hablarle de aquella afición a contar aventis, Hermana, un juego barato [.....] Habló de frías tardes invernales sumergidos en el tibio mar de diarios y tebeos de de acre olor, en la trapería de Java, alrededor de Sarnita [.....] Pero las mejores aventis eran las de Java en días de lluvia, cuando no salía a la busca con su saco y su romana. Fue un día de esos que se le ocurrió por primera vez introducir en la historia un personaje real que todos conocíamos [.....] Con el tiempo perfeccionó el método: nos metió a todos en las historias, se metió él mismo [.....] Aumentó el número de personajes reales y redujo cada vez más el de los ficticios, y además introdujo escenarios urbanos, sucesos que traían los diarios y hasta los misteriosos rumores que circulaban en el barrio sobre denuncias, detenciones y desaparecidos.

SDC2 (revised, 1989 version)

Sor Paulina cabeceaba sobre sus sedantes, *dejando morir la conversación*, pero el *melancólico* celador *insistía*; quería hablarle de de *nuestra* afición a contar aventis, Hermana, un juego *bonito* y barato [....] *Y* habló *Nito* de frías tardes invernales sumergidos en el tibio mar de tebeos y *periódicos* de acre olor, en la trapería de Java, alrededor de Sarnita *y de su voz agazapada, revieja, abyecta y reverencial contando aventis* [....] *-No sé de que juego barato me hablas -gruñó la monja.* Pero las mejores aventis eran *siempre* las *que contaba* Jave en días de lluvia, cuando no salía a la busca con su saco y su romana *y se quedaba en casa, recordó el celador*: fue un día de esos que *a Java* se le ocurrió por vez primera introducir en la *aventura* un personaje real que todos conocíamos [....] Con el tiempo perfeccionó el método: se metió él mismo en las historias *y acabó por meternos a nosotros* [.....] *Java* aumentó el número de personajes reales y redujo cada vez más el de los ficticios, y además

Era una voz impostada recreando cosas que todos conocían de oídas: hablar de oídas, eso era contar aventis. Las mejores eran aquellas que no tenían ni pies ni cabeza, aquellas en las que no había que esforzarse para que resultaran creíbles: nada por aquel entonces tenía sentido. En realidad, sus fantásticas aventis se nutrían de un mundo mucho más fantástico que el imaginado por ellos. Arruinada su capacidad de asombro, sólo captaban las señales del azar: Amén aseguraba haber visto mujeres preñadas pariendo chorros de arroz en la Montaña Pelada [.....] en el cine Roxy vio como [sic] acribillaban a uno de la bofia con una escopeta de caza de juguete. A veces, acucillados en torno a la más increíble aventi contada por el traperero, la niebla les traía la sirena fantasmal de un buque en el muelle y era como una sirena

introdujo escenarios urbanos *de verdad, nuestras calles y nuestras azoteas y nuestros refugios y cloacas* y sucesos que traían los *periódicos* y hasta los misteriosos rumores que circulaban en el barrio sobre denuncias y *registros, detenidos* y desaparecidos y *fusilados*.

Era una voz impostada recreando *intrigas que todos conocíamos a medias* y de oídas: hablar de oídas, eso era contar aventis, *Hermana*. Las mejores eran aquellas que no tenían ni pies ni cabeza *pero que, a pesar de ello, resultaban* creíbles: nada por aquel entonces tenía sentido, *Hermana, ¿se acuerda?, todo estaba patas arriba ,cada hogar era un drama y había un misterio en cada esquina y la vida no valía un pito, por menos de nada Fu-Manchú te arrojaba al foso de los cocodrilos. Lo Ky, los cocodrilos para nuestro amigo’, ordenaba el chino perverso y cabrón dando unas palmadas* -*Más respeto, celador.* -*Era un chino de película, Hermana.* -*Aún así.*

En realidad, *pensó Nito, aquellas* fantásticas aventis se nutrían de un mundo mucho más fantástico que el *que unos chavales siempre callejeando podían siquiera llegar a imaginar: historias*

oída en sueños, no creíble,
 viniendo de un mundo
 infinitamente menos real que el
 nuestro.

-Esto son aspirinas -dijo Sor
 Paulina -Haz el favor de no
 mezclarlo todo (pp. 80-81)

*verdaderas con cocodrilos
 verdaderos, historias de
 delación y de muerte escuchadas
 fragmentariamente y de
 soslayo en las amargas
 sobremesas de nuestros padres,
 cuando se abandonaban al
 recuerdo, y que, sin embargo,
 no tenían la misma extraña
 fuerza de convicción que las
 aventis inventadas por Java o
 por Sarnita. Arruinada su
 capacidad de asombro, sólo
 captábamos los signos del azar:
 Amén aseguraba haber visto tres
 viudas preñadas pariendo chorros de
 arroz y de harina en la Montaña
 Pelada [.....] en el cine Roxy vio
 cómo acribillaban a un policía
 secreto con una escopeta de caza,
 pero de juguete. A veces,
 acucillados en torno a la más
 increíble aventi contada por el trapero,
 en invierno, al anochecer, la niebla nos
 traía la sirena lejana y fantasmal de
 un buque en la entrada del puerto y
 era como una sirena oída en sueños,
 no creíble, una sirena surgida de
 un mundo infinitamente menos real
 que el nuestro.*

-Esto son aspirinas -dijo Sor Paulina
*quitándole de las manos un frasco sin
 etiqueta* - Haz el favor de no mezclarlo
 todo. (pp. 28-29)

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